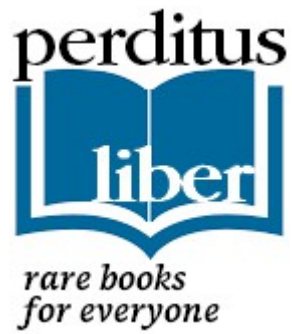




LISTEN. MOON!

BY
LEONARD
CLINE



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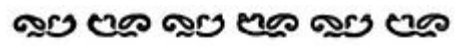
Leonard Cline

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Listen, Moon!

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By the same author:

GOD HEAD

Viking Press, 1925



Listen, Moon!

BY LEONARD CLINE



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Contents

Chapter One
Chapter Two
Chapter Three
Chapter Four
Chapter Five
Chapter Six
Chapter Seven
Chapter Eight
Chapter Nine
Chapter Ten
Chapter Eleven
Chapter Twelve
Chapter Thirteen
Chapter Fourteen
Chapter Fifteen
Chapter Sixteen
Chapter Seventeen
About the Author

For

LEO RABBETTE

*who, on the hill road,
lingered an hour with
Higbie and Katharine and Leonard.*

Listen, Moon!

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Chapter One

I

SITTING on the driver's seat one is thrust up by just so much nearer to the benignity of the sun; and when it is the sun of an early May noon in Maryland it is subversive even of resolutions that tread the earth. On this particular May noon, as his hack loitered out of the brick and stone formalities of the Baltimore streets into the Lowered lanes of Walbrook, the reins lay loose in Sam's black fist. The high black hat on Sam's head was pushed far back and his ebony visage shone with tints of amber in the full sunlight. His mouth hung open but his eyes were closed.

Locust trees stood along the lane, with a feeling of blossoms eager to burst in the green mistiness of their fernlike foliage. Beside them were sycamores with trunks mottled green and brown and yellow and leaves already crisping and sere at the edges: thoughtful trees, that even in spring hint of the autumn to follow. From time to time a rugged beech extended its smooth branches in generous welcome to all who might seek shelter; and here and there a tulip tree, aristocrat of the woods, drew itself up, sleek and fine and strong, the tree of youth with gladness and pride and consciousness of power. Over the fences teemed honeysuckle vines in full blossom.

1

By nose and ear the noon and May penetrated into Sam's sleepy spirit: the stirring of leaves in the light breeze, the fragrance of moist earth and flowering honeysuckle warm in the sun, the distant purl of Gwyn's Falls splashing over its rocks in the valley to the left. But Sam saw nothing at all, and so it happened that his hack turned not in at the stone gate that bore the name of Higbie Chaffinch but continued idly down the lane. Half a mile beyond, the jolt of the vehicle over a rock roused the driver.

Recognition of his error gradually prevailed on the darkey. He sat up, pushed his hat to a lesser degree of tilt, and pointed his carriage back toward its destination.

In a vague unworried way Sam wondered why his fare had not stopped him when he passed the gate. But then, he speculated, the little man for

whom he had called that morning, and whom he had taken behind the hearse at the head of a small cortege to the cemetery, had not seemed at any stage of the trip very alert to what was going on. A silent, dusty, old little man who didn't seem to know much, Sam remembered. Seemed timid and embarrassed, had to be told what to do all the time.... Well, if his fare was in no hurry, certainly he, Sam, was not.

The reluctant amble of the horses subsided into a walk. At the stone gate Sam opened one eye a fraction of an inch and tugged languidly on the right rein. Up a winding drive the carriage crept. Before the porch of an old frame house quite covered with vines it halted. Here the concentrated odor of an entire lilac bush smote Sam full in the face. He succumbed.

2

When the mailman strolled across the lawn at two o'clock he was hugely amused at the sight of a big black driver sound asleep on the seat of a black hack at the doorway of Higbie Chaffinch. The horses even drowsed with half-shut eyes, switching lethargic tails at somnambulistic flies. Curious the mailman peered into the carriage, and therein he perceived the figure of Dr. Chaffinch reclining on the black cushions, while a gentle but persistent droning snore testified to his tranquillity.

Had the mailman been sufficiently erudite he might have meditated that the face of Dr. Chaffinch, with its thin nose and rather large eyes, its sparse gray moustache and listless goatee, was a countenance at once arresting and vaguely pitiful. There was something of the stoicism of a Cicero there and something too of the baffled wistfulness of a Don Quixote. But not being erudite at all, the mailman did not meditate thus upon Dr. Chaffinch.

His only thought was, as he deposited three or four letters in the box and tiptoed off the porch, that once again his call had not entailed an encounter with Mrs. Chaffinch, whose custom it had been for seven years now to scold him daily for the deficiencies of the postoffice department; and this so cheered him that he was whistling ere he reached the lane.

II

HIGBIE awoke with a start, and knew he had forgotten something. He struggled anxiously out of the haze, and presently awareness of his surroundings accelerated him into full consciousness. He must have gone to sleep on

the way home from the cemetery, and here he was already at the house. He opened the door of the carriage and dismounting glanced upward. There reposed black Sam.

Shame surged through Higbie as his understanding increased. How many neighbors had passed and had looked into the yard during the last hour or so and had seen Dr. Higbie Chaffinch, professor of the Latin language and literature at the Johns Hopkins University, slumbering contentedly in the vehicle that had just brought him back from the funeral of his wife? It would be a scandal in the whole neighborhood, Higbie thought, and his cheek reddened.

“Come, my man!” he said to the driver. Sam stirred not. Fearful of attracting attention to a contingency that doubtless had attracted already too much attention, Higbie raised his voice a little. “Come, there, you, driver! Heus!”

The stubbled chin of Sam jerked up from his waistcoat and a dark eye peered dubiously down.

“You have been sleeping, sir,” said Higbie edgedly. “I ... Of course I shall have no further use for you today.”

Mumbling some hazy rejoinder Sam clucked his steeds in turn out of their doze. Higbie watched the carriage lurch out of the yard and down the lane. As he crossed the porch a squirrel scampered off, pausing at the railing to scrutinize the master with a bright beady eye. Higbie turned the doorknob and let himself in.

The slam of the door behind him went echoing through

the empty rooms. Higbie paused, startled. And now for the first time since the death of Minnie Higbie realized that he was all alone, quite alone.

It may have been fifteen minutes that he stood there in the hallway, his back to the door. He felt dizzy and weak all over and somehow like crying. He felt so helpless and so uncertain in that silent house. It was his house, and yet it was a new house into which he had been led and where he felt himself a stranger. All around him were his things—his and Minnie’s things. Chairs and rugs and tables and pictures on the walls, pieces of every sort acquired in the course of nearly four decades of married life. But the warmth and familiarity had departed from them. There was a sense about

them of something alien, something forbidding and ominous. They did not smile a greeting at him as one's own rooms and one's own things should. All at once without warning everything had become estranged.

Feeling his knees tremble perilously beneath him, Higbie turned at last toward his study, fairly groping his way through the hush that filled the house like darkness. There he dropped into a chair and his hat slipped from his hand to the floor....

Vitæ summa brevis ...

Minnie was dead, and it was incredible, and yet it was irrevocably true. One doesn't think much on death, even when one is growing old, going about the day's work. The sun rises in the morning and sets at night; some days are rainy, others are fair; there are three meals to eat a day, and at night, wearily ... to bed. Now and then

5

when an old friend vanishes from the streets it strikes a little caper of dread in one's heart; but a minute later one meets another friend and grasps his hand and he smiles and says good-morning, and then one has forgotten again. Only when death comes to sit at one's own hearth one pauses and feels cold.

And now Minnie was dead, and soon it would be his turn, his, Higbie's. The weight would be on his own bosom, the film on his eyes, the chill in his veins.

Yet, on making an effort to arrange his thoughts and emotions, Higbie found little real terror in them. Neither was there any poignancy of grief over the death of Minnie. He had kept up with her through her mercifully brief illness without losing sleep for anguish; he had watched her coffin lowered into the earth without a sob. And on the way home—all the neighborhood could bear witness to that!—he had gone to sleep. He had wondered throughout at finding himself so apathetic. At first, when Minnie's condition was merely dubious but grave enough to compel him to give up his classes and remain at home, he had had moments of irritation. Then when Dr. McComas, taking him aside, whispered his final prognosis, Higbie had resigned himself to being inconvenienced and thereafter waited patiently for the end.

It was a quiet end, without a word of tenderness between Minnie and him. She turned her face away and with a little shudder ... departed.

No, he felt no intolerable bereavement. The days of his youth and the time of passion were long ago. In the last two decades there had been no true companionship

6

between Minnie and him. She grew more and more absorbed in her church circle and he withdrew farther and farther into his beloved studies. Their contacts were at breakfast and supper, and at night, when each lay down in his own bed alone to sleep, and the two beds were one. Of old there had been indeed a mutuality of interest, when they were undergraduates together in a mid-western coeducational university, and Minnie was a brilliant Latin student. Queer, how people change. And once there had been a flicker of romance too, but it had not survived the birth of Martha.

Then what had Minnie come to be, that he was so utterly lost without her? Well, she was the person who inhabited these rooms when he was away, and had supper on the stove when he returned. She was the person who stepped out of the kitchen when she heard the front door shut behind him, and peered at him over her spectacles from the dining room, and always said with a slight accent of surprise, "O, it's just you, Higbie!" She was the human being who recognized him here, spokesman for rugs and armchair and books and pictures, mediator between him and his inanimate own belongings. She was the extension of his identity through which it was possible for him to stay at home while being away. She was the other voice and footstep in this habitation which prevented his own from echoing so grayly. And now she was dead....

Bene placideque quiescat, terraque securæ sit super ossa levis....

And it was twilight. Higbie went to the rear window

7

of his study, and gazed down through the trees into the valley where Gwyn's Falls frolicked through boulders and reeds. Beyond rose the hills again, the dear hills of Maryland, so bountiful with flowers and growing things, spilling such fragrances on the tepid winds! This was the young time of the year when all the world thrilled with genial vitality; the time of the spurting of sap and the bursting of blossoms. How wonderful was life and youth! And how sad that everything must grow old and stiff and quiet and gray, and eventually shut eyes on all this beauty and joy, relinquish it forever.

Out of the dusk of the valley came the laughter of a girl, tremulous, half-wild; a girl alone, laughing for sheer delight of being. Over the hills in the sky, saffron and yellow and pale sweet green, shone Hesper....

When Higbie turned from the window the house behind him was quite dark. He was faint with hunger and fatigue, and he remembered there was still half a pint of milk and some dry bread and butter in the pantry, where he had made a weary meal that morning after an all-night vigil.

III

FOR a full fortnight Higbie put off writing to Martha. At first he told himself he was too confused to write; he must wait a few days for the spiritual adjustment that eventually would take place. He set about making friends again with his house, and he found the effort gradually more and more successful.

8

There was the stove, for instance, one thing he had never really come to know. He found it to be a creature of moods and considerable independence: at times a truly heroic spirit, when it would boil the water for his tea nobly; at times animated by a perverse cunning, when it would burn up his toast as soon as he looked away; but always in the end his stove, yielding to his desires, loyal and unbegrudging.

Out of the confines of his own study Higbie projected his adventures freely into living and dining-room. He found things there like dogs that have lost their master, eager with welcome. Impulsively one morning Higbie removed from over the mantelpiece that large print of the Good Shepherd Watching His Flocks by Night—rather absent-mindedly, Higbie observed, gaping thus on that incredible star overhead—and in its place he put a mezzotint of the Circus Maximus which bore the inscription “From the Class of 1899 with most affectionate regards.” For days this bald piece of lese-majesty weighed on his spirits and guiltily he avoided the living-room as the scene of the crime. But the eventual effect of his hardihood was triumph. It became the precursor of many other changes. For one thing, within a week after the funeral of Minnie, Higbie lighted and smoked to the end the first pipe that ever polluted the Chaffinch parlor.

It struck Higbie that after all Minnie’s role perhaps had not been that of mediator; rather she had been a guardian of things to prevent any unseemly

intimacy between them and him. She had been arbiter of prohibitions, she had been the extension not of his own identity but of organized

9

society into his house. This thought however Higbie put indignantly out of his mind, and he stepped outdoors to watch the sunset.

The second week Higbie could no longer plead the exigencies of spiritual adjustment. He did find himself entirely too busy now to write that letter to Martha. He was not busy at his monograph on the ablative absolute, of which the manuscript, already 246 pages long, had suffered in dusty neglect from the day Minnie's fever reached 103. Once or twice he tried to resume his labors on that, but he found himself singularly unable to concentrate. He was busy at this time sitting on the grass with his back against a tree, in the rear of the house, looking down the steep slope into the valley.

From beneath his feet earth dropped away to the brink of the laughing brook. How straight and tall the trees rose in the valley, protected from tugging winds! Thicker they grew toward the stream, and there along the banks stood osiers tangled with vines, at times completely occluding sight of the water, at times separated so that between them Higbie could see the glint of fugitive sunlight. On either side of the brook were paths, and along these all day long and late into the night boys and girls strolled hand in hand.

One afternoon there were six girls down in the valley, dressed in loose waists and knickers, with bobbed hair; and they sat together on one long limb of a willow and splashed bare feet in the water and sang. One morning there was a boy by himself. He made his way to a flat boulder in the middle of the stream and lay there on

10

his back, gazing up at the sky, smoking a pipe. Higbie gazed up at the sky too, and it seemed to him that in the expansiveness of that spacious blue his spirit and the boy's touched hands. How wonderful it must be to have a son!

Yes, it was a valley of youth, that green odorous ravine. Age in gaiters and stiff hat did not trespass there. It occurred to Higbie that he himself, living on its very threshold, had not for years and years explored that valley. He made up a fairy tale for himself one day. Down there indeed was

the Marvellous Vale and through it cascaded the Luminous Water; and one day a tired old professor, who had just buried his wife, wandered into the valley and found waiting for him his own rejected youth, the youth he had been too industrious ever to take hands with and dance....

But he must write that letter to Martha.

IV

MARTHA....

Higbie sat at his desk, chin in his hand, staring out of the window, and the ink dried many times on his pen before he made a beginning to the letter.

It was eleven years now since Martha had gone away on a Methodist mission. She was in Africa somewhere; toward the middle of the continent was her district, up around the sources of the Congo, the province of Djabbir. During this period it was Minnie who kept in touch with her, a proud correspondence; and Higbie did no more

11

than nod in assent when Minnie, at the conclusion of every epistle, would put her head in at the study door and say, "Higbie, I am writing to our daughter. Shall I send her your love?"

It was a disappointment, that day thirty-eight years ago, when the doctor came into Higbie's study, grinning cheerily, and announced, "Well, Dr. Chaffinch, it's a big baby girl." Higbie had wanted a son.

Disparagingly he approached the new Chaffinch, but in five minutes the baby had prevailed. Then ensued a lively discussion over a name for it. Higbie urged Psyche; but Minnie—a strange Minnie already she was, that gave Higbie the feeling of being defied as she clutched the child to her—insisted on Martha. Minnie's mother had been named Martha. No poem Higbie could quote, no argument he could offer, weighed against that fact.

But surely, however one might label her, it was Psyche that laughed behind those chicory-blue eyes. Ah, how wonderful was that first lustrum in her life! She fluttered about house and yard, gay and capricious as a butterfly; cupids surely were her playmates, butterflies her guardians, flowers her toys. She was the dryad of the locust sapling that leaned beside the stone coping of the well—the locust that now towered high above the house itself. And then in those days Higbie did go down to the Marvellous

Vale. Psyche would stray off through the trees and he would have to look for her; but indeed he himself was young then and the Vale was his. The house was young, the world was young, there was nothing old in it.... Except the woman in the house, the

12

mother, the strange being who had once been a girl in Higbie's arms, matured now and worrisome and subdued and eternally, inexplicably suspicious, old over night. Why had he not profited by that experience and forewarned his heart against too complete a surrender to another woman—the little one, the child?

The time of Sunday school came. Martha danced less lightly, laughed less readily, shone less radiantly. She put on flesh, spiritually and around the middle. She drew back gradually from Higbie, she clothed herself in primness. She scampered no longer down to the Luminous Water, she no longer burst madcap into his study to drag him willingly away from his studies. When at last she went to college, it was by Minnie's selection a denominational school where she prepared herself for church work. Higbie did not utter so much as a sigh of protest. Long since he had given up his dream of sending her to the university where Minnie and he had worked and loved together. Martha was, he could not deny it, uncommonly obtuse in her Latin.

V

HIGBIE put pen to paper and wrote, slowly and solemnly.

My dear Martha:—It is with greatest grief that I undertake to convey to you word of the decease of your beloved mother. She died yesterday after a brief and painless illness, and will be buried tomorrow. You will have the knowledge of the loving kindness of God and the felicity of the life to come to console you in your sorrow. Let us be strong in the understanding that Mother is now forever at

13

rest. Do not let this disturb your plans or your work, I implore you. With every good wish, I am,

Your affectionate father,

This epistle Higbie conned with grim satisfaction. That it was packed with prevarication he found reason to excuse. How could he explain to Martha in stark words that he had delayed writing her because he had been confused and bewildered by his loss; that it had been necessary to pass through a period of spiritual readjustment; that he had been exhaustingly busy arranging his affairs? ... In Rome they had had the consideration to leave you nine days to yourself after a bereavement. But what would that mean to Martha, without a scriptural text? ... Prevarication was a necessary matter of tact.

The doorbell jangled sharply on his musing. Higbie grimaced, and held his breath. Another alarum, and a third. This was a persistent caller, to be sure. Perhaps it was a telegram? Higbie tiptoed to the study door where without being himself observed he could see who was at his gate. He perceived the angular countenance of the Rev. Mr. Cyril Pudley.... Well, he was not home. He had not been home for the Joneses, or the Murchthaws, or the Updegroves, or Professor Ganz, or Dr. Inchling, or Professor Quoggs. He was not home for anybody.... Thrice, four times the bell screamed on the silence; and it amused Higbie to watch the lines of the Pudley mouth grow more rigid with every unanswered peal. Finally, with a frown half perplexed

14

and half indignant, but thoroughly suspicious, Mr. Pudley stamped off the porch.

Chuckling Higbie went to his study window where furtively he could watch the visitor stalking down the path to the lane. There were lilac bushes all over the lawn, and there was one right in front of his window; and Higbie saw with a shock of surprise that apparently it had released its nymph. She might have been eighteen years old, she wore a white dress and no hat, and her hair was red. Even as Higbie stood transfixed she glanced up full into his eyes. Her face flashed into a smile. She put her finger to her lips in token of secrecy, and then she waved a merry farewell; and then laughing she ran down the path after the retreating evangelist.

Higbie watched and blushed unseen until they were out of sight. Then he went back to his letter to Martha.

15

Chapter Two

I

IT was one Sunday when Higbie finally did go down into the Marvellous Vale, but his intention that morning had not been to do so. He had intended to go to church.

For the last forty years now Higbie had been a punctilious participant in divine worship with the Walbrook Methodist congregation over which most recently the Rev. Mr. Pudley presided. In all this time he had never given the least hint of unwillingness. Indeed, many a time he would be ready and waiting on the front porch when Minnie finally descended the stairs in her spick black poplin dress. He was pointed out as a monument of devotion, he was deferred to by ushers and pastors as well. If his response to this deference was a little vacuous, if he lifted his voice but rarely in the hymns and often conspicuously missed the cue in prayers, these were attributed to a preoccupation excusable in a professor. Minnie herself was voluble in explanations of how much and what important scholarly work lay on her husband's table. As a matter of fact Higbie's participation was merely corporeal and his preoccupation arose from a spiritual indifference. He never felt any urge to worship, there in that raw varnished tabernacle. But if

16

society and Minnie expected it of him he was willing to deposit his body for two hours every Sunday in a front pew. His mind was in a more ancient forum.

After Minnie's death Higbie stayed at home when the churchbell rang. That was part of his impulse to hide. But as the days passed he foresaw that he would not be able to remain in hiding much longer. He had no doubt that people already were talking. They must have gossiped about his never answering the door; one or two letters which he had read but postponed answering indicated as much. Four times Mr. Pudley had come to call; and once he prowled all around the house, peering in anxiously at every window, while Higbie shrank into a portiere in the hall. Higbie apprehended that if he did not show himself soon people might conclude

that he was somewhat deranged. Or, sniffing tragedy, they might get the police to smash into the house....

Well, it was unavoidable, the return to society. Higbie meditated the list of friends he and Minnie had had, and not one of them did he look forward to seeing with pleasure. What a tedious lot they were, the Murchthaws and the Quoggses, the Inchlings and the Updegroves! At last, feeling he could not endure the dull formalities of a visit with any of them, he decided to make his re-entry into the world by attending service.

So, quite early this Sunday morning and with a gasp, Higbie let himself out the front door into visibility. Half a dozen houses that he passed were blank and torpid. Presently he became more calm. It was still the last part of a comfortable Sabbath breakfast time, he reflected,

17

and the comics could not yet have been thoroughly digested after the coffee. People would not be about. As he was passing the Jones's place on the corner however the door opened and out came Mrs. Jones. Her eye fell on him with a clap. She brought up so suddenly that the Bible slipped from under her arm. For a full minute she gazed, a dumpy little woman undone with surprise. Then with a whinny of greeting she hustled back into the house. To tell the rest of the family no doubt that the recluse had ventured at last abroad!

Higbie quickened his trudge feeling hunted. He rounded the corner at a brisk pace and there, a block ahead of him, he discerned Mr. Pudley with his most professionally lamb-and-shepherd smile talking with a neighbor. Higbie found himself trembling nervously and confused. He resolved abruptly that he would not, after all, be early at church and subject so to pre-service condolences and quizzings. He would wait, and then slide into a rear pew a few minutes after service had begun. He could also, he reminded himself, steal out of church a few minutes before service ended. For the present he would walk about a bit.

Here at this corner the road spanned the valley of Gwyn's Falls by a great viaduct. But a flight of steps led down to the tangle of trees and there among them at least Higbie felt sure he would avoid meeting acquaintances. He made haste.

Soon there was the soft yielding of grass beneath his heels, grass spattered with daisies and late dandelions and brown-eyed susans and clover, lavender and yellow.

On either side of him the willows and sycamores spread a screen against the prying eyes of people bound for church. Shrubs leaned over the frolic water; and here was a cluster of dogbane with its delicate little pink and white bells in the sun quite drowsing—how they must tinkle by moonlight! Everywhere peeped the fragile stars of blue-eyed grass ... and in and out wound the path, and on and on Higbie followed it. For a moment he paused before a boulder on which some braggart youth had painted initials in a pair of hearts, linked and stabbed by a crooked arrow. Fools' names ...? A wry and envious proverb.

The limb of a willow scraped Higbie's black hat off and after that he carried it in his hand, feeling nearer to the sun thus bareheaded.

Someone was singing, out in the falls.

II

SOMEONE was singing, out in the brook, behind the willows plaited with creepers. What a lovely voice it was, to be sure! One could not tell if it was the sun singing, it was so warm; and yet it might be the falls, it was so liquid. Thus might a maid have sung in Tempe; and surely, surely Apollo was here in this valley of flowers and fragrances! Higbie held his breath and listened.

About what a wicked girl she'd been, the voice was singing, and about how, not being able to be sorry, she

concluded to be glad; and straightway put a ribbon in her hair and smiled at a boy who chanced to be passing.... Now what a curiously pagan thing to be singing! and Higbie, lured by a curiosity he could not deny, put forth his hand to part the willow screen and peered tremulously through. Then "Perii!" muttered Higbie and he turned to flee but it was too late. Behind him there was a rustle of branches and a surprised hello, but a hello not so much surprised as eager and genial and young and fresh and luring. He looked around. It was the nymph of his lilac bush.

"Isn't this the sweetest day you ever saw in your life?" she exclaimed. She had been wading, she climbed barelegged out of the water and sat down on the grass. "Are you playing hookey from church too?" ... "Good

morning,” stammered Higbie. “I’m ... I’m not going to church this morning, you know.”

“Well, I was going to church but I guess I won’t now.” She surveyed her wet white feet and chuckled. “I guess I couldn’t if I wanted to. I’ve lost my shoes and stockings. And won’t I get the devil though when I get home!”

“Pshaw!... I ... I’m sure that ... I’m sure you won’t...” Higbie felt little panic blushes tingle up into his ears.

“Yes, I will, too. You don’t know papa like I do. I’m Ruth Pudley, you know. The Reverend Mister Cyril Pudley’s child.”

“Yes, indeed, of course, Miss Pudley,” Higbie murmured. Then he recollected he had never met this girl.

20

He wondered if his embarrassment was as visible as it felt.

She mused smiling. “That was funny, wasn’t it? The day papa and I came to see you. Why didn’t you let us in? Papa was wild. And I saw you there in the window, you know.”

Higbie gripped himself. “You must understand, Miss Pudley,” he explained, “that I am often engaged in labor possibly quite as important as conversing with a preacher, and that on such occasions I——”

“But what about his charming daughter? O, well, I’ll forgive you. And you needn’t bother trying to tell me any fibs. I know why you didn’t let us in. You just didn’t want to see papa. I don’t blame you. It must be awful to have papa sympathize with you. Praise the Lord, he never sympathizes with me. And you needn’t worry, because I didn’t tell him you were there all the time.”

“You didn’t?” Gratitude expanded within Higbie’s heart. “But ... now, that was kind of you, Miss Pudley! I ... I...”

“Don’t mention it, professor. And don’t call me Miss Pudley. It sounds too much like Bryn Mawr. And besides, if you’re going to play with me this morning you’ve got to be my playmate. Why don’t you sit down, Higbie?”

More bewildered than ever but with an exhilaration, not in the least unpleasant, Higbie found himself sitting on the lush turf beside the dryad. With an added shock he watched her take cigarettes and matches from a pocket

21

of her skirt and begin to smoke. It occurred to Higbie that women did of course smoke nowadays, he had heard talk of it among his colleagues on the faculty, he had actually witnessed it. But he had never before beneighbored the practice and Minnie's views regarding it had been, he remembered, vigorous. This morning he found himself incapable of criticizing, content with the sun and quite englamored by his companion.

Ruth at this juncture bent a fierce scowl at the sky. "Yes, I'll get hell when I get home. Papa and I never did hit it off and I'm in particularly bad right now. I suppose you haven't heard the horror? No, papa'd be ashamed to spread the news. Well, I've been busted out of college."

Higbie could no more than gasp, but Ruth brandished a warning finger at him. "Yes I did, and don't you say a word, and I'm glad of it. I had 79 unexcused absences in one semester and I was on special probation and I told old Thrump, she's the dean, I told old Thrump that if I'd got half as much good in class as I did out of it there'd be some reason for staying. Now I suppose you won't like me any more but I can't help it. You would have found out sooner or later. And it'll be your loss, I tell you, if you don't like me. And I'm going to play around here all summer and not do a thing but sing and be happy." With a sigh Ruth lay back on the grass, pillowing her head on her clasped hands, and closed her eyes; and over her the sun poured, all of it, it seemed, benign inexpressibly. "Ho hum! I think I shall melt. Higbie, have you ever melted?"

22

At that moment Higbie was not precisely melting, yet he was experiencing a peculiar and entirely genial softening of spiritual edges and angles. Then too there was a queer twitch in his throat; for it is a solemn thing and challenges one for all one's life, to be expelled from college. Who could have had the heart so to punish Ruth? Higbie picked a handful of grass and held it to his nose, inhaling the smell of moist warm earth.

"Sometimes it has seemed to me that the attendance rules in our colleges should be administered with discrimination," he remarked. "Of course ... Ruth ... you must realize that they are imposed for the lax students, the mischievous young people who will do their tasks only if compelled to do so. But if a student perseveres in his studies ... it may conceivably be argued——"

"What I want to know is," broke in Ruth, "why try to make people learn when they don't want to? All they do is forget again, and it's a horrible

bore. Now me, for instance: why try to make me learn economics?... But Higgles”—and Ruth exhaled a meditative cloud of smoke—“you know, I’ve been wanting to see somebody, and I think you,ll do. I’ve been wanting to see somebody about papa.”

III

“I’VE been wanting to see somebody solemn and wise, about what I’ve found out about papa,” Ruth amplified, and once again she favored the blue infinity with a frown.

23

“What you have found out about him?” Higbie squirmed with foreboding, and dropped an apprehensive glance over his shoulder. “I’m sure,” he parried, “you could not discover anything unworthy of your father. In the year he has been with us here in Walbrook he has made himself respected throughout the community as a man, Ruth, of uncompromising rectitude. And I am sure you would not tell——”

“That’s just what I’m going to do. Tell you about it. And you needn’t worry that it’s going to be anything scandalous because it isn’t. It’s ... it’s just horrible. It’s the klan.”

Higbie sighed with relief.

“Yes, sir; the Ku Klux Klan. You know I haven’t been home a great deal. I’m away all winter at school or college; and last summer I had a job in the library in New York, and the summer before that I worked in a bookstore. And my mother’s been dead since I was a baby, you know, so there’s nobody to keep track very well of what papa’s up to. And now I get busted out of college and can’t get a job and have to come home and what do I find?”

Higbie felt qualms as if eavesdropping, but he reassured himself. It was nothing indeed scandalous. And was not this child in distress? She appealed to him and he would not fail to counsel her. “Yes,” he prompted; “you found ...?”

“I found the regulation night-shirt all rolled neatly up under papa’s pillow, with a red cross on the front and all that. And I found the pointed hat. I found the

24

whole damn silly outfit; and Higbie, there was mud on them. Papa's been running wild."

"Nugæ!" said Higbie. "It would not seem to me——"

"Then, you remember there was a parade of them at the church a few weeks ago. They marched up the aisle to the platform and made a stupid speech and presented papa with an envelope containing thirteen dollars. In small change. The Chronicle had quite a write-up about it. Remember?"

Higbie did not remember either the parade or the article. It must have been, he reflected, during Minnie's illness or immediately after.... He remembered that the Ku Klux Klan had been sneered at even by the Murchthaws once or twice for its bombast and sensationalism. Membership in it—and he could hardly imagine the dour Mr. Pudley capering with the sheeted knights! —indicated perhaps a lack of dignity, a puerile craving for excitement, an utter misconception of values, but nothing more sinister.

"There is nothing I think very heinous in joining the klan, Ruth. It is an institution with which perhaps you and I cannot readily sympathize. But it is after all little more than a sort of uniformed fraternal order." ... You and I. Higbie glanced at his companion, and she did not appear in the least affronted or amused, and he said "You and I!" Something indescribably warm and renewing expanded in his heart and suffused him.

"I'll tell you what it is, Higbie. It's sort of a boy scout movement for children over forty ... but they have no mammas and papas to spank them if they're not

25

in bed by nine, and they just raise hell. I'm scared of klansmen, Higbie. They give me the shivers. They ... you know they actually flog people and tar-and-feather people and ruin people's lives. They do it right in New York City and they certainly won't hesitate to do it here. I hate them!"

Higbie smiled incredulously. "At least they won't harm you, Ruth. They won't interfere with you if you behave yourself. They may be impelled on occasion by a misdirected zeal, but——"

"That's just it, Higbie. I'm a very wicked girl. And you're a very wicked boy." Ruth's frown dissolved in a peal of merriment. "It's wicked not to go to church, and it's wicked to drink gin, and it's wicked to read Jurgens, and it's wicked to smoke cigarettes, and it's wicked to love anybody, and ... you do love me, don't you, Higbie?"

... “ ‘List, sweet Moon, where I learned to love,’ ”

murmured Higbie, with a smile that pushed up from some buried depth of him; and this time he did not even blush. “I do indeed, Ruth.”

Lying there in the sun Ruth laughed again. “O, Higbie, I’m a very, very wicked girl. I was singing a song about it. First I sang it to a hymn tune: you know, that one about ‘Fling out the royal banners, ye soldiers of the cross,—something like that. Then I sang it to a tune of my own. It was very pretty. It’s a poem by Edna Millay. Do you like poetry, Higbie?”

26

IV

“I AM very fond of poetry,” Higbie averred. “I was thinking of Theocritus, down here in this valley. Do you know Theocritus

“Who?”

“Theocritus. He wrote about woods and flowers and shepherds and dryads. I think ... I think he would have liked you. You ... you sort of look like a dryad there with all those Rowers.”

Up stirred the breeze and brushed Higbie’s face with soft hands. The sun on his pate filled him with warm languor. He contemplated Ruth ... and suddenly he thought of Martha; he pictured Martha’s one hundred and seventy-five pounds, topped with a scrabble of luke hair, sprawled on the grass. The comparison gave him a twinge of pain. This wicked girl! But surely she was innocent and sweet, this blithe girl, with all her mischief and caprice and even impiousness; surely it mattered little if there were no adequate understanding of the ablative absolute in that madcap head! Youth! It wanted something exuberant to express it, and the classroom offered not much. Out here in the Marvellous Vale Ruth might sing shaming the dryads themselves. The ancient cadence stirred goldenly about him, seemed borne on the winds, dissolved in the sun. Carpe diem....

“My God!” ejaculated Ruth; sitting up abruptly. “I’ll bet church is out already, and papa will be growling home to find why I wasn’t there, and I’ve lost my shoes and

27

stockings! You'll have to come and help me find them, Higbie. But you'll have to take your shoes and stockings off too. They're on a stone out in the brook somewhere.... 'Daughter of iniquity, why did you not attend divine worship this morning?' 'O reverend father. I cannot tell a lie, I was on my way to church and I lost my shoes and stockings.'...

"And while we're looking for them," Ruth continued, holding out her hand to Higbie as he stepped gingerly into the water, "you can tell me all about Theocritus." ...

Hand in hand they explored the splashing falls, shimmering now in the noonday sun overhead; and they laughed when one of Higbie's trousers came unrolled and fell into the water, and laughed again when Ruth nearly lost her footing on a slippery submerged stone and threw her arm around Higbie's neck to save herself. They laughed at the rush of water on their legs and the feel of the cool mud underfoot. And Daphne, Higbie called her; and he told her how the river nymph, fleeing Apollo, had been changed into a laurel tree.

"I'll be Peneus," Higbie volunteered.

"But don't change me into a tree!" Ruth protested. "Of course, you'd have a hard job trying to do it. Papa's been trying now for nineteen years. Trying to turn me into a quince tree, and all I want is to be a girl.... You see, this is the sequel of the story. After being a tree for so long, Daphne is sorry now that she was so timid of Apollo, so she begs her father to turn her back into a girl. And she goes out to look for Apollo ... or somebody else; almost anybody, you know.... But

28

gods ought to have crowns or something, oughtn't they?"

Ruth snatched the wreath from her own head and put it on Higbie's and regarded him laughing and clapping her hands with delight. Higbie put by with a gesture two thousand years and the confusion appropriate to his time.

"Chaplets," he remarked, "were used continually by the Romans and the Greeks, not only in religious ceremony, not only at the athletic games, but on convivial occasions as well. The coronæ convivalis. They were symbols of civic dignity no less than the military achievement, and ... to be sure! they were supposed to exercise a restraining and mollifying influence against the effect of wine at banquets. There is every reason to believe that

Cicero himself, that chiseled and purified spirit, did not disdain flowers upon his brow; for he too enjoyed the long——”

“God almighty!” Ruth’s fingers gripped his arm spasmodically and he looked aghast whither she was looking. There on the brink in his black garments, grim with wrath, towered the Rev. Mr. Pudley. For a moment Higbie and the clergyman stared at each other, and Higbie made no doubt that Pudley’s consternation was no less utter than his own. Never had the gaunt divine seemed so enormous or Higbie himself so small. But the Pudley countenance was hardening into crags, the Pudley eyes were blazing with the rage of a latter-day Hosea; and presently he spoke.

“Dr. Chaffinch,” he said, “I have known you and your lamented wife now for almost a twelvemonth. When

29

the contingencies of the Lord’s service brought me to Walbrook I found her and you among the most earnest and devout members of the flock. Her death some weeks ago struck me dumb with grief, and I had only the solace of knowing that the Lord’s will is accomplished in ways beyond our little mortal understanding and that a saint had been gathered to her reward.

“Doubtless you too were stricken with grief and have found solace according to your lights. When I myself lost Mrs. Pudley my comfort was upon my knees. Yours now seems to be ... in wading. It seems not enough for you to shun the church, hide away from the companionship of clean spirits and the summons to good works. You go ... go wading ... on the sabbath ... with a ... with a...”

Here the mounting fury of Mr. Pudley choked him silent and he concluded with the gesture of damnation, one that Higbie recognized clearly from remembered sermons. Fury too was mounting in Higbie so that he could no more than glare; and upon this passionate hush Ruth’s cool chuckle burst with shattering force.

“He went wading ... on the sabbath ... with a ... with a ... daughter of yours, old Ku Klux Kleagle!” she said mimicking.

“Cease!” The roar left even the stalwart frame of the prophet shaken, and it was only with a severe effort that he was able to continue. “As for you, Ruth, you will follow me home as soon as possible. I cannot be seen on the streets with you in your present condition. And as for you, Dr. Chaffinch, I feel it my duty to call

30

to your attention the fact that you are causing scandal in our tranquil and God-loving community. I have prayed for you nightly in the solitude of my study. I prayed for you and called on your sorrowing brothers and sisters in the Lord to pray for you this morning at divine worship. I pity you, and I fervently hope our Heavenly Father may renew your heart and enlighten your mind and lead your erring steps once more in the ways of righteousness and good odor.”

Mr. Pudley turned away. There were spouting volcanoes and cataclysmic eruptions within Higbie; but he understood that, standing barefooted and wet in a brook, with a chaplet of wildflowers around his gray locks, hand in hand with a dryad of nineteen who had just been expelled from college, he was in no position to defend either his purpose or his dignity. “Conclamatum est!” he muttered. Then he heard strange sounds and looked at Ruth and saw she was crying.

“Pshaw!” said Higbie unutterably moved. “I’m sure your father will not be harsh. If you want me to I’ll speak to him myself.”

“I’m not crying about what he’ll do to me,” Ruth sobbed. “I was thinking about you. I’m so sorry! I didn’t expect anyone would see us, and ... and I’ve wondered a lot if you weren’t lonely all by yourself ... and I liked you ... and I knew you didn’t want to go to church!” She brushed her tears angrily aside. “Why shouldn’t you go wading if you want to? Why shouldn’t you stay away from church if you want to? Why shouldn’t you do as you damn please, instead of getting

31

all stiff and prim and never, never, never having any fun?”

Ruth menaced the minishing figure of her progenitor with a small but truculent fist. “You damned old busybody!” she shouted—and Higbie shuddered in fear lest all Walbrook be on the banks and hear. “You’re the meanest man in the world to talk like that and I’m going to tell the newspapers all about you!” Then once again she subsided. “Higbie, you’re a darling ... but I suppose you hadn’t better play with me any more. I’m a wicked girl and I’ll never amount to anything ... thank God! ... and people will talk about you if they see you with me. And the klan will call on you and burn their silly crosses in front of your house and you’d better go to Wednesday prayer-meeting and confess your sins in public!”

Higbie took from his head the wreath and looked at it a moment and slipped it into his pocket. Eheu!... “The sun,” he said, “has shone all

through me this morning, and it was cold in me before. I am quite foolish perhaps and yet I have been very happy. Come ... I suppose we had better find your shoes and stockings. And mine.... Where did we leave mine?"

V

ON dry bread without butter and tea for which there was no milk, Higbie made his supper.

All by himself he sat at his littered kitchen table and

32

blushed and blushed. Sometimes he blushed for embarrassment, thinking of the spectacle he made when Pudley thundered through the willows. How many more besides the clergyman had seen him? Ah, the whole neighborhood would learn about it soon enough. Pudley would make a sermon about it next Sunday. And some would snicker at him and others would pity him, deeming him crazy.

Well, possibly he was crazy. He had never done anything like this before, indeed had never felt this way. And sanity does consist for a man of sixty-four, a member of the church, a pedagogue and scholar and exegetist of the Stoics, in a neat felt hat prim on the head and a sedate trudge along the street. But that was wrong! Why should old people insist on getting older and stiffer and dryer? Why should he not go in wading if it pleased him? No reason at all. That was the answer Ruth had implied. He had the word of youth for it. ... But what about wise old age?

Seneca, now, or Cicero.... Blushing more deeply than ever Higbie hurried to Theocritus for comfort, and got none at all. There was not the slightest indication that Theocritus at sixty, even in his most idyllic moments, had ever gone wading with the parson's daughter. Tibullus? He too with all his gentleness had nothing but contempt for the frivolous old man. Joy is the special province of youth and Phœbus only is young forever. All the world was against him, Higbie brooded; he had scandalized it and it would frown with indignation

33

or laugh with scorn.... But then, why deny the Marvellous Vale to Ruth?

At this thought Higbie's cheek reddened again but now with rage, and he left off worrying about himself to fume at the memory of Pudley's

treatment of Daphne. How blithe was her youth, how capricious and lyric, how vital her delight in life! and yet how considerate she could be, how very tender! It occurred to Higbie that never once had she mentioned his bereavement, although surely she knew of it. And he recalled with a new thrill that Youth through her had welcomed him as an equal, as a companion, without a thought for his gray hair! ... You and I ... Youth it was took him wading and he had been young again!...

Yes, he would go see Pudley. He would tell him a few things about young people, and about fathers and daughters, which possibly the clergyman did not understand. Yes, cost what it might to face the sneer he foresaw would greet him, he would go once to Pudley's house and champion the cause of Ruth's loveliness and joyousness against the austerities of methodical Christianity. He would not lose control of himself, no, no! It would spoil everything to punch Pudley in the nose. He would restrain himself, and just this once he would call on the pastor, and after that he would never condescend to speak to him again.... Would he go tomorrow? No, better make it ... some time next week. When his rage had somewhat abated....

Higbie refilled his pipe and reached into his pocket for

34

a match. Something soft and damp was there. He pulled it out, and it was a wreath of withered wild flowers.... Thessaly.... How cool the Luminous Water had been, how enchanted the Marvellous Vale, how singing the warm sun!

35

Chapter Three

I

IT was nearing July when Higbie first met Hiltonshurley Moggs, and it was not for the purpose of dining with him that he strolled downtown that day of momentous decision.

Higbie had spent the day previous, or the greater part of it, on the cellar-door in the rear of his house. From this slanting eminence he had discovered, these molten gold afternoons, he could command many a magic vista down into the Marvellous Vale. On each side of it were troupes of peasant hollyhocks with their bright folk-blossoms. One could sit here and smoke, with one's back against the house. One could sit and muse on one's encounter with Daphne. So here Higbie had been sitting, and that night he went to bed without any plan at all for the morrow, and quite without apprehension of portentous events.

He was awakened when the morning was already half spent by peals of laughter from below. They brought him to with a start, and he leaped out of bed with the alacrity acquired in decades of response to the summons of Minnie from the foot of the stairs.

"Higbie!" called a voice, and it was not Minnie's shrill

36

portamento, it was even more unexpected than hers would have been.

"Good morning!" Higbie called back quite bewildered and casting around for a shirt. "I'm afraid I'm not dressed yet. Won't you sit down for a minute?"

"I won't sit down," replied Ruth, "because there isn't an empty chair in the house. All full of truck. Are you saving those newspapers for something? And that bag of peaches on the divan is rotten. And the kitchen's a sight. I climbed in the back window because I couldn't wake you up, and I didn't dare come in the front door for fear papa'd see me. He's at large this morning, been out klanning, I suppose.... I climbed in the back window and there were five thousand mice in the kitchen. And all that garbage on the table! And don't you ever wash your dishes? It's scandalous and if I were a, kleagle I'd hang a warning on your door."

Higbie retrieved one sock from the waste-paper basket and thrust his toes in the top of it. He bore with fortitude the fact, as reconciled by compulsion of widowerhood, that they came presently out the bottom. "Yes..." he shouted, uncomfortably. "Of course I do. But last night, you know ... I was so busy..."

"You go on and get dressed and I'll get you some breakfast."

"No, no!" Higbie clamored. "Please don't bother! I've already..." He floundered desperately in quest of his drawers.

"Hurry up," responded the voice of Ruth, decrescendo as she withdrew toward the rear.

37

Higbie prosecuted a sketchy toilet. He must take care to lock the windows after this. But it never occurred to him that Ruth would play second-story man in this amazing fashion! And here she was, already in full possession of his domain.... Hos mores imperitissimus! To break in thus on his retirement!... Not a clean collar in the bureau! Higbie tossed over various heaps of discarded raiment, on the floor of the closet, under the dressing table, in this corner and that, until finally he found one less obviously used than the rest. Eheu, what trousers! wrinkled across from heel to pocket, bagging at every joint, and much old mud caked on them. He completed his dressing with the aid of a safety pin and hurried downstairs.

Breakfast was served for the first time since the passing of Minnie in the dining-room and there was a fresh white cloth on the table and a napkin. What profanities were here! The wedgwood blue china that Minnie had reserved strictly for functions was out of the sideboard. In a vase was crammed a prodigal bunch of lilacs, sinfully redolent. There were bananas sliced with the top of the matutinal pint of milk poured over them. There were hot biscuits, and scrambled eggs, and a pot of coffee with seductive aroma.

"Tut, child!" Higbie muttered. "I never drink coffee, you know."

Ruth appeared in the kitchen door. Somewhere she had found an apron that had been seen last on Minnie. A cigarette drooped from her lips and even as she removed it between her fingers a sprinkle of ashes fell on the

38

hallowed calico. Wonder of wonders, that the apron did not stiffen out itself and shriek at the prodigy!... And her cheeks were dawn.

“Why, you grouchy old bear!” Ruth exclaimed. “What do you keep coffee around for, if you don’t use it?”

“Mrs. Chaffinch served coffee on occasion, you know,” Higbie hastened to explain. “And I didn’t intend to be gruff. I’m ... I’m overwhelmed by your kindness, Ruth, I am indeed. Nevertheless it won’t be hard for you to understand that at my age, accustomed all my life to the simplest diet ... zweiback and tea ... Panis siccus, a trifle of dried bread, was enough to stay the hunger of Seneca; a bit of fruit besides. Hot bread I’m sure would ruin my digestion.”

Ruth caught his eye and Higbie quailed. “Would you like tea?” she said. “Sit down and eat your bananas.”

She disappeared, and the door swung to behind her, and from the other side of it came a vexed and ominous rattle of kitchenware. Higbie took a step to follow but his courage failed and he wilted into the chair that Ruth had placed for him. Obediently he dipped his spoon into the fruit....

And Higbie contemplated the biscuit: soft, crumbly biscuit of a yellow texture that indicated outrageous waste of butter. Venturing a tentative finger forth Higbie ascertained that they were not many minutes out of the oven.... How brusque he had been to Ruth! How considerate it was of her, to come into his kitchen and sweep and scrub and set things in order! To be sure

39

it was a different order from his, he would be unable to find things and would have to undo all her work, but she could not know that.... Higbie took a biscuit and broke it in two and scowled on the rich, gently steaming middle. Utterly indigestible, it would be the death of him.... No, Ruth was not aware what chaos she was creating. She desired only to make him more comfortable, and here he was grumbling and frowning and rejecting the breakfast she had prepared for him. He really ought to try to eat something, ought to make a pretense of enjoying it, a gesture of gratitude.... Higbie placed a piece of butter on the bottom half of the biscuit and firmly placed the top half upon it. Then grim with foreboding he nibbled a corner.

He was buttering his second biscuit when Ruth brought in the tea. To some extent his premonitions were relieved by the fact that so far he experienced no sensations except the most pleasureable athwart his middle

regions. He essayed a wan smile. "I just thought," he averred, "that since you made them, Ruth, I'd try one.... And they really are, you know, delicious."

Ruth sat down across the table from him. "Higbie," she said solemnly, "do you know what's going to happen to you? You're going to starve yourself to death and give yourself indigestion and everything else if you go on like this much longer. You've got to get a housekeeper."

"Nugæ!" exclaimed Higbie. "'A housekeeper! What would I do with a housekeeper? Why, even when Minnie

40

was here we never had one, and there's not half so much to do about the house now."

"I'll tell you one thing a housekeeper would do." Higbie squirmed as he felt Ruth's coldly appraising gaze pause on smirched collar, buttonless shirt fastened with a pin, and puckered coat-sleeves. "She'd take care of your laundry and press your clothes. I'll bet your bed hasn't been made since ... for a month."

Higbie, confused, broke his third biscuit. I do as well as I can. People all make too much of trivial things. A frugal and reticent life, a domicile without pretense, a covering for one's modesty..."

"And then if you had a housekeeper you might be able to ask me over from time to time for dinner, and tell me about Theocritus. How can I come over for dinner now? If I do come, either I have to do the cooking and you don't like what I make, or else you have to do the cooking and I'm sure yours would be horrible."

"Ruth, don't misunderstand me," Higbie protested. "I do indeed enjoy your cooking, too much, I'm afraid. I have quite forgotten myself this morning, I've made myself quite a glutton. But the happy life doesn't consist in dainty fare and pretty dress. The figs of Epicurus——"

"Higbie, do have a cup of coffee with me," Ruth cajoled, and she proceeded to pour. "I really came over this morning to ask your advice, Higbie dear. I'm thinking of running away and being a bootlegger. Are you in the market for some nice home-made gin?"...

41

NOT until early evening did Higbie finally start downtown to place his advertisement. Many considerations had swayed him all day this way and that, until finally the mailman brought him the precipitating factor. It was a letter bearing the large flamboyant red and green postage stamp of Djabbir, and the address was in the thin slanting chirography of Martha. Not to Minnie as of old was this epistle directed, but for the first time to himself, and Higbie knew that his daughter had heard of her mother's death.

Higbie did not open the letter at once. He took it back to the cellar-door and there he sat for a long time with it in his hand. In it he foreknew without much clairvoyance there would be a rebuke. All the voices of that life from which Minnie's death had sundered him were reproachful, and all the gestures. And he did not want to be reproved. He did not want his own daughter to scold him now, after that scolding of Pudley's.... But the fruit of his meditation was bitterness of fury at the preacher, and in the end Higbie ripped open the envelope.

"My dear father," Martha wrote, "this letter comes to you from a bed of anguish in our infirmary here for the news of my sainted mother passing out which came to me in a beautiful letter of condolence from the Rev. Dr. Pudley, prostrated me. So far I have heard nothing from you and I would begin to be afraid for you if it wasn't for the news about you which Dr. Pudley included.

42

I can not forbear to say that this news was almost as distressing as that of my bereavement.

"Duty calls me home to take care of you in your old age and I can surely be home with you by the first of October.

"I would have suggested that you close the house until I get back and go and stay with dear Mrs. Murchthaw who would have been so glad to take care of you for mother's sake. But the news of you that Dr. Pudley sends makes me see that this would hardly be possible to ask of her while you are in your present frame of mind regarding the church. I know you would not have me ask this now of Mrs. Murchthaw while your attitude is such. So I think you ought to employ a housekeeper..."

Higbie looked away from the tidy sheet. Yes, it had been tactless of him to put off writing Martha for so long. But Pudley would have written anyway, and whether the preacher's letter arrived before his own or after

would have made no difference. Pudley would have told the same story of his apostasy and Martha would have believed it. And what more had Pudley written since? The whole story of that Sunday debauch ... in the Marvellous Vale, in the Luminous Water!... was already doubtless on its way to Djabbir....

The first of October, and now it was the brink of July....

Higbie knocked the cold ashes out of his pipe. Wrath and pain seemed to have stifled each other, as he arose and stretched and stood a moment before turning into the

43

house. With a numbed indifference at heart for past and future alike, Higbie found himself aware that it was an exceedingly suave and gracious summer evening. He went through the front hall and took the one hat that hung on the rack there and loitered out of the door down the path to the lane.

At the office of the Chronicle Higbie toiled over his advertisement. After three tentative drafts he completed a provisional statement. This he studied gravely.

WANTED: Reputable elderly woman, white, as housekeeper in small suburban home, family of one. Must be able to take complete charge of household affairs and prepare simple meals. Applicants will be interviewed in person.

Over the phrase "family of one" Higbie pondered. Could designing females misconstrue him? Would he attract a horde of intriguing cooks? He took a fresh sheet of paper and rewrote the notice, substituting the phrase "small family." But a new doubt assailed him, the memory of Ruth's hot biscuit seduced him and his condition of unaffected eupepsy lent its sanction. Once more he took a clean sheet of paper and now his pen hurried with guilty speed.

Wanted: Housekeeper for small suburban home. Must be good cook.

This Higbie handed to the clerk, and he pocketed the change from his dollar and turned away with lifted heart.

44

III

THERE are no hotels in Walbrook with brilliant glamorous portals and the coming and going of well-dressed men and laughing women. There are no cafes along the drowsy lanes of that suburb, spilling lights and the sound of merriment on the night, piled windows beckoning with green and red lobsters on ice and heaps of succulent oysters. Nor are there in Walbrook theatres with bright hoardings and illuminated announcements of amusement within; nor along the unpaved roads of the sleepy hamlet do taxis scurry and buses lumber and street-cars thrust jangling through the throng of traffic. Now, as Higbie emerged from the Chronicle all this stir and radiance of the downtown streets burst upon him, no longer puzzling over matters of household economics, and were vastly exciting.

But once or twice in the routine course of the years had Higbie previously found himself downtown in the magic of mid-evening. On these occasions he had hurried to his street-car without pausing for so much as a glimpse, with the realization that Minnie would be waiting dinner for him at home. Now however it occurred to him that his house in Walbrook was dark, his oven cold, and no reason at all for haste. He might if it pleased him spend the rest of the evening downtown. He might actually have dinner in one of those beguiling cafés!

Higbie, swallowing hard, examined his purse and discovered that it contained two dollars and twenty-six cents.

45

And so, turning north on Charles street and west with the crowd, he loitered three blocks and found himself in a sea-food house.

He was still at soup when his purely perceptual perustration of the lavishness and gaiety around him was interrupted by the arrival of a stranger, who, after a glance around the in-no-wise crowded room, pulled out a chair at Higbie's own table and sat down in it. Higbie gasped at this effrontery. He scrutinized the newcomer with growing irritation. An odd person to be sure! Bellus homo, Higbie mused with a sneer of stoic contempt. A man of sixty, one would say, with the clothes of a sophomore! Walking stick, and a pansy matching the purple of his cravat in the lapel of his trim gray suit! For a moment Higbie debated whether to call the waiter and have the intruder ejected. But when the waiter did finally come to the table, it was not Higbie who commanded him but the stranger.

Higbie watched dumbfounded the manner of this person. Back in his chair the man leaned, lifting his face, and for long minutes it seemed he studied the deferential menial. From top to bottom he surveyed him, as if to make sure that in every detail of garb and bearing he was fit to be trusted with a dinner order. Then a slow smile overflowed the levees of his bigly piled features as he outlined a serial repast, specific even in details of gravy and seasoning.

Off went the waiter with much unctuous mowing. The stranger selected a cigarette from an ornate gold case and lighted it. Indifferent his eyes swung once

46

around the restaurant and returned at last full upon Higbie. Nervously Higbie took refuge in his soup. When next he dared a furtive glance from beneath his brows he saw with relief that the man with the pansy boutonniere was engrossed in a book, a small book pocket-size leather-bound.

It seem an interesting book, Higbie thought, pausing with poised spoon to study his vis-a-vis but ready at the first hint of detection to hide once more in the covert of dinner. The stranger's gaze fairly gripped the pages, pounced on them and bolted them whole, five to the minute. From time to time he emitted noises indicative of emotional strain ... a hissing intake of the breath ... a cluck of tongue on teeth ... a staccato cachinnation in three distinct syllables: "Ah ... ha ... ha!" The spectacle intrigued Higbie, decoyed him quite out of his vigilance, and he was neatly trapped when suddenly the book snapped shut and the stranger looked up.

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" he ejaculated; and Higbie perceived that his smile was an unrippling inundation with something singularly gentle and luminous in it. "How many times we read it! And always with a new delight! I was downtown, I thought of it suddenly, I went into a shop and bought a copy ... and I have seven already at home! I think there is a pirate in the heart of each one of us, I do indeed. His heart should hang. Hm-mm-m-m?"

Higbie glanced at the book which came tossing across the table with a curiosity he could not deny. Treasure Island ... and the author a man named Stevenson.

47

Here doubtless was another of those trashy romances which so clutter the stores, crowding even Horace back into rear and shadowy shelves.

“Hm-m-m-m-m?” iterated the stranger with a persuasive rising inflection.

Dipping into his soup, “I regret, sir,” Higbie brusquely replied, “that I am not acquainted with the book. It seems to have affected you profoundly.”

Expert in spacious grimaces, the stranger regarded Higbie with the widest eyes in the world. Then there came another triplet of monosyllabic guffaws. “My dear fellow, that’s good! That’s good indeed! As if any one had never read *Treasure Island*!”

“I mean just that,” snapped Higbie. “I have never read it. It happens that my leisure to read is conditional entirely upon my work, and that my work is in the classic literatures which impress me as infinitely superior to anything produced since. After Seneca, after Cicero, after Horace and Tibullus and Propertius, the scrivening of contemporary hacks has little appeal to me.”

Slowly up and down the stranger nodded his head. “And what an utterly useless thing it is, to be sure, the study of Latin and Greek,” he remarked at last. “Do you find a great deal of joy in them, my friend?”

“It would not be a rash deduction, from the fact that I have given my life to them, that I do. And I can’t agree with you that they’re useless. Through them only can one arrive at the source of all that is best and most noble in the art and the philosophy of mankind. Through them——”

48

The stranger deprecated broadly with a large hand. “My dear fellow, pray don’t misjudge me. I myself am devoted to the useless. My particular interest at present is in astronomy. Ah, you will cry, that is not useless, for by the stars mariners guide their ships across the seas and the commerce of remote peoples is made possible. Hm-m-m-m-m? You are entirely wrong, sir! I study the stars only to look at them. I change their names. I make for myself new constellations——”

“Sort of celestial building blocks Higbie muttered.

The stranger ignored the interruption. “——every night,” he continued. “Not always, of course: Alphard, the lonely one, is beautifully named and Orion is a superb constellation; one would not transpose a letter or a star in their order. But Polaris is plain and ugly and prosaic, and so I have named it

for a friend of mine; and now whenever I go abroad at night and look at the skies and see Polaris, I say ‘Clarissa,’ and I think of my friend.”

There was a misting of pathos in the smile now. There was something tenuously moving, more than ingratiating, beneath the indiffidence and foppish dress of the man.

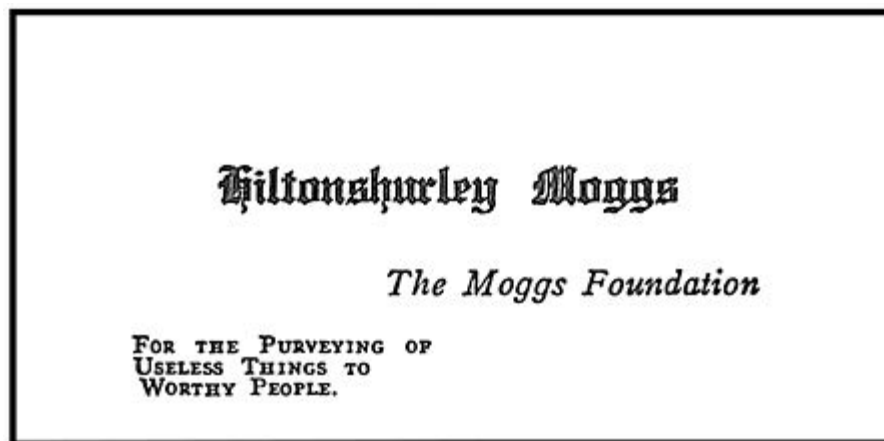
“It was your adjective misled me,” Higbie explained. “Ordinarily one employs it with a connotation of something inferior, and I was doubtless hasty in jumping to the conclusion that you meant to disparage the classics. And we classicists are sensitive, perhaps too sensitive, these days, when there is so much agitation to wipe the classics off the curriculum.”

49

“Precisely. We are living in an age when only the strictly useful commands attention. But there is no use in beauty, and the joy which comes from it is a joy that starves. Hm-m-m-m-m? And so my life like yours has been a revolt from the useful.”

...“There are very few like that in the world,” said Higbie, aware of a warm quickening of affection for this eccentric. “I have told you what is my business...”

Before he could complete his sentence a card was on the table before him. It was edged with gold, it exuded the faintest perfume, and it read:



“Moggs,” commented the stranger. “Hiltonshurley Moggs. The Moggs Foundation, for the purveying of useless things to worthy people. Hm-m-m-m-m?”

The big hand hovered across the white cloth. Higbie, somewhat dazed, allowed it to grasp his own.

“And you?” inquired Mr. Moggs.

“Chaffinch,” said Higbie. “Higbie Chaffinch.”

50

“My dear fellow!” exclaimed Mr. Moggs; and Higbie, discerning once more in Mr. Moggs’s smile that warp of pathos and of gentleness, smiled back. “I’m truly delighted, Mr. Moggs, to make your acquaintance,” said Higbie.

IV

AS one who feels the prod of the gods and shuts his eyes to what may lie before, Higbie allowed himself in spite of the fact that nine o’clock was past to be served with coffee, crackers and camembert. He had not perished that morning, he might survive the night.

“But your work, Mr. Moggs,” he confessed, “quite engages my curiosity. The Foundation, I mean. I know really of nothing like it. Would it be impertinent of me...?”

“Ah ... ha ... ha!” ejaculated Moggs, but with so solemn an inflection this time that Higbie perceived the phrase was one of variable significance, serving to express the ferment within of mirth and of the graver emotions no less.

“You would find it unusual of course, I dare say you would find it quite unique among philanthropies, Dr. Chaffinch; and I don’t talk about it much. I’m afraid that some day some newspaper will discover me and make me a laughing stock. For myself, having been so long alone, I should not mind that; but——”

“My dear Mr. Moggs, you must pardon me!” protested Higbie. “I didn’t mean to pry and I beg you to forget my unfortunate question.”

51

Far across the table leaned Moggs. “My dear fellow!” he said.

“And so...” Moggs resumed, gazing off over Higbie’s head, “my father, who made some money here in Baltimore in tobacco, intended me to succeed him in the business. It was not a day of commercial courses in our universities. There was no Chair of Hotel Management, no Professor of Factory Methods, half a century ago. Hm-m-m-m? But it was considered

something for a man of quality to have some knowledge of the humanities, and my father sent me to Harvard.

“My social connections gave me entree into a certain circle there. My family ... well, the Hinchfields of Hinchfield, you know, and the Severns on my mother’s side; and the Perrinses of Culpeper County, and the Moggses, of course. ... In short I was enjoying college immensely when, presently, I met Clarissa.

“We fell in love with each other, Dr. Chaffinch. Poets have sung of love and death. There is in Spain the legend of the chevalier who, meeting his lady on the road, knelt in the dust and sued for her favor. She went coldly by him, and there he stayed on his knees in the road, weeping. His mount wandered off through the woods, and still the chevalier remained. When his tears were all shed he began to pray for the peace and happiness of his lady, and he abode in that spot with his orisons for seven years and seven days; and when his prayers were all said he died. It’s a pretty legend but I think that the love of everyone who ever did love is more

52

like that of that other chevalier of Spanish legend, Don Juan Tenorio, however loudly they bewail the broken heart....

“Except Clarissa’s love and mine. There was no vehemence in it, no flare and confusion. How shall I explain?... We would be together and sometimes we would read, and sometimes she would sing for me. But when we were together most of the time we merely sat close to each other and looked at each other and let our hands lie clasped. The wonder was so deep ... and I was still drowned in that wonder when Clarissa died.

“That was why, I presume, her death did not overwhelm me with grief. I was still bemused with wonder and I could not realize she was gone. And I continued in a way with my studies and was graduated. I put a last wreath on her grave ... smiling, I remember, and quite happy in my heart. Then I came back to Baltimore and took a desk in my father’s office.

“The business was easy to learn, I was soon able to take much of the responsibility of it from my father’s shoulders, and he was more than satisfied with me. But the wonder still enveloped me, the companionship of Clarissa which had never known many words was still very real to me; and I found my absorption becoming more and more profound. I reached as one might say the peak of my efficiency and then the decline began. Instead of fitting myself to assume continually a greater share of the burden, I began

to shirk what I already had, until at last I did little more than come to the office every morning

53

and sit there all day long ... with Clarissa, in the hush and intimate white tranquil sweetness of our being together.

“When my father died his will provided for the sale of the business and the creation of a trust fund of which the income should be mine for life, but the capital only when I married.”

Up the table-cloth and down with his right hand Mr. Moggs played two octaves, legato, paused one moment to adjust to an imperceptible degree the pansy, flicked a minute ash from his lapel, and lighted another cigarette.

“And so ... somehow naturally ... I thought of the Foundation. Clarissa and I thought of it. Our income isn’t large but we are a frugal and contented people and we have been able to do some good.... Ah ... ha ... ha! We are even now, Dr. Chaffinch, about to present to you that book of buccaneers and adventure, which I assure you is one of the most useless in the world! And you, my dear fellow,” ... and Moggs’s large, gentle smile leaning quite close made lumps rise up in Higbie’s throat ... “are I am sure one of the most worthy people.”

V

It was nearly eleven when Moggs dropped Higbie at his door, and the taxicab swung out into the lane again. Higbie let himself in the quiet house. When he turned on the light he paused to contemplate the book Moggs

54

had pressed on him. *Treasure Island*.... Higbie remembered now something about a fabricator of romances, an occasional essayist, who was beginning to have a considerable vogue when he, Higbie, was finishing his studies at Ann Arbor.

Standing in the hall under the light, Higbie idly turned a few pages, reading a casual paragraph....

...“—doubloons, and louis-d’ors, and guineas, and pieces of eight, and I know not what besides, all shaken together at random. The guineas, too, were about the scarcest, and it was with these only that my mother knew how to make her count.

“When we were about half way through, I suddenly put my hand upon her arm; for I had heard in the silent, frosty air, a sound that brought my heart into my mouth—the tap-tapping of the blind man’s stick upon the frozen road. It drew nearer and nearer, while we sat holding our breath. Then it struck sharp on the inn door, and then we could hear the handle being turned, and the bolt rattling as the wretched being tried to enter; and then there was a long time of silence both within and without...”

Higbie shut the book and held it up and scrutinized it from all sides. Nicely bound.... And what a thing was the sea! and pirate islands and the blue Caribbean and treasure trove, and wild adventure with the buccaneers! Moggs’s words came back to him: “I think there is a pirate in the heart of each one of us, I do indeed. His heart should hang.”... Higbie smiled, and put out the light, and groped his way upstairs to his bedroom.

Singular how wide-awake he felt, after his long walk and the unwonted excitements of the evening. Eheu, it

55

was the coffee, no doubt; he would not get a wink all night for his folly. He threw off his coat and his vest and loosened his collar. Then he spread the book open on the dresser and weighted the leaves down with a hairbrush and a jar of ointment....

“He had pitched, as I have said, against the bulwarks, where he lay like some horrible, ungainly sort of puppet; life-size, indeed, but how different from life’s colour or life’s comeliness! In that position, I could easily have my way with him; and as the habit of tragical adventures had worn off almost all my terror for the dead, I took him by the waist as if he had been a sack of bran, and, with one good heave, tumbled him overboard. He went in with a sounding plunge; the red cap came off, and remained floating on the surface; and as soon as the splash subsided, I could see him and Israel lying side by side, both wavering with the tremulous movement of the water. O’Brien, though still quite a young man, was very bald. There he lay, with that bald head across the knees of the man who had killed him, and the quick fishes steering to and fro...”

Higbie slipped his arms out of his suspenders and his trousers fell to the floor. Then he manœvered for three minutes, trying to step out of the trousers and at the same time keep his eyes on his book. This proving impossible he abandoned the effort. He would just finish this chapter, he told himself, and then he would continue undressing.

And there Higbie stayed, a little man with shirt-tails free and skinny legs mounting from the midst of a pile of hopelessly involved pants, until the end of the book.

Chapter Four

I

“G LASBY!” came a bawl from the city desk; and Kendrick, pulling from his typewriter a sheet over which he had been laboring for an hour now since his arrival at one o’clock at the office of the Chronicle, roared a lusty “Ahoy!” Less lustily he muttered “moron swine” in description of his boss, as he crossed the broad room; and by the time he reached the desk where Dave Corson waited his face was bright with smiles betokening enthusiasm and eagerness to serve. It was a moment for tact. Whatever Corson wanted of him, he, Kendrick, must have the good will of Corson.

The room was almost empty. The early rush of reporters and plotting of assignments was nearly over. One after another the men of the staff had trailed away to the street, this to the latest suicide, that to cover the arrival of the distinguished globe-trotter and amateur critic, Sir Ponsonby Whittlesome, putatively come to sue for the hand of the latest Green Spring Valley debutante. By five o’clock they would be coming back and the bustle would resume, but now it was end of the first watch— a time for momentous conference.

“Here,” said Corson, “is the story you’ve been dreaming

57

about all your life, Kenny. It’s a story most men wouldn’t see and I don’t want you to fall down on it. Look at this; did you ever hear of that guy?”

Corson produced a card, once flashily ornate with its gold edging but thumbbed and greasy and broken now. Upon it Kendrick read the name Hiltonshurley Moggs, of the Moggs Foundation, which was—in the name of God!—“for the purveying of useless things to worthy people.” Kendrick whooped. “Send me to that man! I can think of more useless things ... but it’s not useless people, is it? That lets me out.”

Corson beamed with gratification. “Well, here’s the story. This morning a ragged old bum came into the office and gave me the card. Said he’d been a newspaperman himself once, and I guess that was true; he had the lingo.

But he was rumdum and stinking and he called this Moggs every rat he could lay his tongue to.

“It seems the bum picked the card up one day when he was hunting butts in the gutter, and he went to see Moggs, who lives —Corson glanced through a sheaf of notes until he found the memorandum— ”... at 210 South Gilmor, on Union Square. He came right out and begged a dollar for booze. And Moggs, he said, gave him a pint right there! So the bum went out and got drunk and didn’t show for a week. Then he went back and this time he was pretty cocky, wanted money too; he was hungry, he said, and needed some clothes. Moggs turned him down flat. ‘You can get those at the Salvation Army,’ says Moggs; and he won’t even give him— ... What in hell are you laughing at?”

58

“Why, it strikes me as rather funny,” said Kendrick making haste to compose his features.

“Well, that’s not the way it strikes me.” Corson glowered. “It strikes me,” he declared, rapping the desk with his pencil, “as if we may have stumbled on one of the cleverest and most insidious bootleg schemes in the history of prohibition. That guy Moggs is probably the heart of the whole thing, lives in a lavish home, hosts of servants; and you’ll remember Moggs is a good name in Maryland, Kenny. I’ve got Carroll looking up the clippings on him now.”

Kendrick wrenched his face into an expression of suitable shocked solemnity. “That’s right,” he said frowning. “There’s probably a hot society end in this tale. Why, I wouldn’t wonder if this chap Moggs is one of the old Confederate families, and he’s selling booze as a protest against prohibition and the invasion of state’s rights! Keeping up the Civil War, Dave—sort of a bootleg guerilla!”

“My idea precisely,” said Corson, cordial once more. “Well ... there you are. Go out and clean up on it.”

Kendrick budged not. “Take a look at this first, will you, Dave? It’s my expenses on that Fairmont trip and I’d like to collect.” He slipped in front of Corson the sheet upon which he had spent so much effort. “There are one or two things that you’ll want me to explain, I guess. Lord help us, Dave, that was a tough story. I nearly killed myself on it.” Kendrick fortified himself with a cigarette.

“Christ!” erupted Corson suddenly. “I should say

you will have to explain! What's this? Three dollars for a magnifying glass!"

"Well, you'll remember, Dave, we found that old hat with the Baltimore store label on it?" Kendrick perspired with earnestness. "Of course we all knew there'd be blood stains on it. I went south with it and got it up in my room at the hotel; and I didn't want to show it to the cops for fear they'd grab it. So I had to get a magnifying glass, don't you see, to examine it.... That was the hardest assignment, Dave, I ever had! Why, I collapsed when I got on the train——"

"But here," chuntered Corson. "The next day you've got seven dollars for a larger magnifying glass!"

"Yes, sir; that's just what it cost, Dave. You see, after I looked over the hat with the small one and didn't find anything, I couldn't sleep all night for thinking about it. I was positive I'd find those blood stains. And the next morning——"

"You didn't find a God damn stain on the whole hat," Corson prompted.

"No; but it wasn't because I didn't try, Dave. I would have found them if there'd been any there. The way I worked——"

Lugubriously Kendrick watched Corson's pencil blot out a subsequent item. "At any rate, we can't buy you shoes," he explained. "Not even if you did wear them out running to the store for magnifying glasses." ...

Kendrick took the sheet, now adorned with Corson's signature, and went for his hat. And he felt exhilarated no little as he stepped to the cashier's cage on his way

downstairs and drew ninety-seven dollars for three days in Fairmont. It was a neat profit of half a week's salary.

II

ON the street Kendrick paused. It was early and it was warm. He need not try for any story tonight; and indeed it did look as if the assignment would have to be built up. Not of course along the channel through which Dave's colloidal genius was thickly seeking sensation. Kendrick chuckled again with amusement at the notion. But unquestionably there was a story behind

this rococo card ... the Moggs Foundation ... a damn good story, too. All stories prying into the private lives of eccentrics were good. Blighted love, lost cause, lonely man waiting out the end that he prays for every night.

Across the street was the Caxton Hotel and it suggested coffee. Kendrick slipped through the traffic and presently, alone in the small dining room, was contentfully supplied with pot and cup. Out of his coat pocket he took a book ... an old book, by the crisp yellowness of its leaves, in antiquated French, bound in worn calf: a second-hand store treasure trove. It was entitled *Histoire des Pirates Anglois*, and Kendrick resumed reading where he had left off.

...“Il est certain qu’on eut compassion d’elle ... but the Court could not help passing sentence; for among other things that were testified against her, it was proved that talking one day with Captain Rackham, he taking her for a

61

young man, asked her what pleasure she could find in thus enlisting with the Pirates; that not only was her life in constant jeopardy, but also if she should have the misfortune to be captured it must terminate in an ignominious death. Upon which Mary Read replied: That violence was not what she feared; that men of stout heart must never dread death. If Pirates, she said, were not set a-sun-drying and if terror did not deter many poltroons, a thousand rascals who live as honest men and who nevertheless busy themselves plundering Widow and Orphan or cheating their neighbors, would also put to sea marauding, and the Ocean would be covered with these villains: and all the commerce of the world would be lost.

“We have mentioned above that she was pregnant, for which reason the Court put off her execution, and there is evidence she might have obtained pardon; but a little while afterwards she was seized by a violent fever ... dont elle mournt en prison”...

Kendrick poured another cup of coffee and he thought of Boston street and the ships that were rotting there at the ruinous wharves. Yesterday on a story he went down to that desolate old quarter, with its boarded-up taverns and doorways haunted by lean scarred cats. He lingered through empty streets where once the oyster business flourished and murderous roustabouts thronged, loading car after car of the famous Oyster Special which every midnight slid out of Baltimore and went roaring away north to Philadelphia and New York. The oyster trade was gone now; it had moved

down the Chesapeake where a hundred hamlets were each a miniature Boston street....

Kendrick had trouble finding his man. Along wharves worn white and smooth by the rains of decades, piled

62

here and there with heaps of dry glistening shells, strewn with decaying ends of cable and anchors and spars, he made his way. Then rounding a corner he came on an old schooner drowsing at her pier, nudging it sleepily as the waves lifted her from time to time, bare masts swaying lazily in the sky, shrouds and halyards flaccid and rattling. Out beyond was the Patapsco shimmering in the sun, a brace of gulls swerving over it, and beyond the Patapsco was the Chesapeake, and beyond the Chesapeake were the seven seas ... reek of the briny wind, liberty of scuttled horizons!

It was the captain of the schooner that Kendrick sought, and he talked with him in the little cabin aft. When he took his departure the mariner crept rheumatically after him up on deck, blinked his raw-lidded watery eyes at the dilapidated craft, and offered her to Kendrick as she lay for seventy-five dollars....

Mary Read ...! What a girl she must have been! Cavalry man in the French army until she fell in love with a brother officer, disclosed to him her sex, resigned her spurs and married him. And then after his death Gentleman of Fortune, until anew she fell in love, this time with a fellow rover, and one night was hapless enough to have a prankish breeze tug shirt from throat and discover a breast far too white to his astonished eyes; and she put ashore with him and was duly and ceremonially married. Mary Read, last of Rackham's crew to surrender, blazing away with pistol and cutlass when the men of the company had fled between decks, captured not until she was felled and disarmed!

63

Kendrick, yearning away from the dusty obligations of organized society, fancied himself at the wheel of the Royal Fortune—schooner of eighteen guns, but fashioned remarkably like that slumbrous old craft out Boston street—close-hauled in a malapert wind, careening over the tumbling bright waves; and by his side was Mary Read, red-haired by preference and reduced to not more than twenty years: white-throated, green-eyed, and a rantipole chantey on her lips!

... But even as he gloried in the vision there came a thought that brought him to with a gasp. What after all could be more useless than a pirate ship? And was not he a demonstrably worthy person? ... A moment later Kendrick laughed at himself for the idea; but he found his curiosity in this eccentric Moggs quite stimulated and he paid his bill and left forthwith.

III

AMONG his peonies in the minuscule garden which the order of mid-nineteenth century Baltimore architecture has left behind each foursquare residence, Hiltonshurley Moggs was busy when Zambia from the kitchen door summoned him to receive a visitor.

“Thank you, Zambia, and will you show the young man into the parlor?” he called; and he turned back to his peonies but plied with less deliberation now his shears so that presently his basket was heaping with the opulent lush flowers. In the kitchen he selected two vases of a

64

creamy majolica from a shelf of a score such vessels in various shapes and glazes, and in them he disposed his peonies. With a vase then in each hand he proceeded up the back stairs; and as he went Moggs speculated who his visitor could be. Callers were few in the placid iteration of sunny days on Gilmor street. But among those who had sought out the Moggs Foundation were some most interesting people, and latterly Moggs had formed the habit of playing a game with himself: which was to lay a wager after the departure of every caller on the identity of the next who should come.

Down a narrow corridor laid with a thick carpet upon which his footfalls gave no sound went Moggs with his flowers and through the door that was never closed into a stately chamber ... the mastery-room. Four-poster bed, dresser, chiffonier, chairs and footstool were in smooth brown walnut. With linen of a rich cream color the bed was spread, and over this a patchwork quilt that would have wrung the heart of a connoisseur of the colonial. Not a mote of dust stirred here, only the shadow of old fragrance hovered in the corners, cool and dim and reposeful was the room and yet quite fresh and alive; and indeed the chief function subserved by Zambia in the Moggs dwelling was to keep this one chamber perfect, habitable albeit its invitation had not lulled a weary body now for half a century.

It had not been occupied; that is, save by the portrait of a girl with dark hair wisping about a delicate pale face which Moggs the younger, as Zambia remembered, had

65

brought back with him such ages ago from college; and by the flowers which every morning and every evening, every day of the year, Moggs's own hands arranged in two vases before the picture. This afternoon, the peonies. Moggs placed them on the chiffonier above which the canvas hung, and stood there a moment so hushed that one might have thought a consecration was being wrought, and then he smiled and went soberly out.

From Clarissa's room Moggs, quickening his step, went to his own and hunted through papers on a cluttered desk until he found his gambling chart. The risk involved in his betting was this: did he lose, he gave the dollar to Zambia, and did he win he transferred it from his bill-folder to his right trousers pocket as ready cash. Now by the chart he discovered that he had bet it would be next time a butcher, third class (that is, above middle age), and white, seeking a ukelele. It was not an engaging prospect and Moggs went downstairs at last reluctantly. He was immensely delighted in spite of the loss of his wager when he found awaiting him in the parlor a neatly dressed young man with a cheerful ingenuous smile and a grip as hearty as his own.

IV

"IT'S an imposition of me to ask any of your time," the youth confessed. "Because I'm not in the least in need of charity, not even in useless things. But the other day I picked up your card from the sidewalk and my curiosity has been growing ever since, until today it just bowled

66

me over. You see, I ... I now and then do useless things myself."

"Really!" said Moggs. "But what are they, Mr. Glasby?"

"Well..." and the young man grinned at him with a smile of boyish diffidence "...I write poetry. But that isn't how I make my living. That's what I live for, and in the meantime I'm a newspaperman."

Moggs started. He had not come in contact with reporters before, he certainly had never imagined them to be like this ingratiating fellow, so

courteous and so candid; he pictured them more thumping, sallow young men that spat. But if Glasby were a reporter ... “Dear me,” said Moggs, agitated exceedingly, “you know, I never talk to newspapermen. You can see that publicity would be most unhappy. People don’t understand the sort of thing I’m trying to do ... hm-m-m-m?... and I’m doing it so quietly.”

“Don’t be alarmed in the least, Mr. Moggs,” the young man reassured him. “I’m not coming to you now as a newspaperman. Lord, if we couldn’t ever forget we were newspapermen life wouldn’t be worth living. I’m here just as ... as a poet. And in that capacity the worst I could do would be write a poem to you; and that would be terrible because I’m a rotten poetaster.”

There was no being suspicious of such a boy. Moggs found himself uproarious with laughter over his own adventures as purveyor of the beautiful useless, which he recounted at length warmed by Kendrick’s appreciation. And shortly they were upstairs in Moggs’s study, with

67

the papers shoved back from the edge of the desk to make room for their glasses, swapping stories, exploring through shelf on shelf of books. What a good time!

“Yes, there are some queer people come here ... for if they weren’t queer to start, you know, sooner or later poverty and ridicule make them so. Hm-m-m-m? Some queer people and some very pathetic ones. Just the other night downtown I stumbled on a quaint, quiet little old man who has lost himself quite out of the world for decades in the classics, a professor at Johns Hopkins. Then his wife died and left him alone ... in a clove hitch, as Ben Gunn might say. Ah ... ha ... ha! Will you believe it, Kendrick? He had never read Treasure Island!... So the Foundation presented him with a copy!”

This amused Kendrick beyond measure, and Moggs guffawed again over the boy’s amusement, while he busied himself with jug and seltzer bottle.

“Of course, what will happen now after he reads it is, he’ll disappear some day and the next we’ll hear he’ll be pirating down Chesapeake Bay. I nearly went myself the other day. Moggs, I had to chase down to Boston street, and tied up at a wharf there was one of the oyster schooners, none too swift I guess and with an odor made you fairly dizzy, but broad and roomy and sturdy. And just as I was going the captain said he’d sell her to

me for seventy-five dollars.... Well, I looked seven times at the Nancy—that's her name—seven times out across the Patapsco; and if I'd had the money in my pocket I wouldn't be here now."

68

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" came Moggs concurring, and he felt the old nostalgia whispering in his own breast. Pirating, down the Chesapeake! and Topsail Inlet and Providence Isle, and galleons deep with Maya gold!... "And if I'd been with you I fancy the two of us would not be here today. Hm-m-m-m-m?"

"Especially if you'd been reading this book right here." Kendrick produced his *Histoire des Pirates Anglois* and Moggs examined it eagerly.

"I think," he said, "I have an English version of it; I have quite a collection of pirate stories, you know."

"With the story of Mary Read in it? and Anne Bonny? the two girls in Rackham's company?"

"No, I don't know them."

"Good Lord, they're the greatest yams of all!" Kendrick exclaimed. "Let me leave the book with you. And that'll give me an excuse to visit you again!... You know I've concluded there's buccaneer blood in me. And actually one of the men in Anstis's company was named Glasby; he was a frightful rascal."

"I am convinced we have buccaneer souls right now." "Why, that notion of yours about pirating down the Chesapeake tempts me absurdly! Whoever heard of getting a ship for seventy-five dollars! Hm-m-m-m?"

"It's almost like running off with it. Of course it would cost more than that to fit her out and clean her stem to stern. And we'd need a Jolly Roger _____"

"And costumes" suggested Moggs: "sashes and bandanas and black knee-breeches."

69

"But well-a-day, where would we get us a Mary Read?" sighed Kendrick.

Not a word replied Moggs but he sipped a little and thought a moment, watching a black bird that revelled drunk with summer and space in the blue now flushing with the first mild erethism of sundown. Clarissa ...

V

KENDRICK rejected the street-car and set off walking at a brisk pace towards town, for, as often in the eight years during which he had practised the peeping profession of reporter, he had a spiritual problem to solve.

What a story! he told himself. What a story! Dispatches from down the bay, Blackbeard once more coursing the Chesapeake, fishermen see his ship swing by with the ominous skull-and-crossbones at the mainmast! All Maryland and Virginia beam-end with excitement at last, and then the chase and then the discovery; and then in conclusion the personal story of Moggs, of the Moggs Foundation.... But what about poor Moggs?

Defiantly Kendrick squared his shoulders.

In the first place nothing had come of it yet and nothing need come of it; he could report simply that Moggs was a quiet, kindly, eccentric old man and the vagabond informer was crazy. But then, Corson would ask, why not write a story about the Foundation, about the eccentricities? And Kendrick knew that that alone would make an extraordinarily good story, with photographs of Moggs. To be sure it must be handled in such a way

70

that Moggs would be hounded by an army of crooks and beggars and taunted on the streets by snickering crowds that would recognize him. But that always happened in stories like this.

On the other hand there remained the fact that, under the prohibition laws, Moggs was a criminal and had admitted it. He gave away whiskey, case after case of it, to people who came haunted and weary of the daylong drudgery of existence. A paper might not be in favor of prohibition but it could avow no other policy than respect for the law. No extravagant imagination was necessary to accuse Moggs of contributing in a unique and insidious way to innumerable violations. That he himself, Kendrick Glasby, derided the law and transgressed it without a qualm also mattered nothing. He was not paid to exploit his own opinions. It was his business to scale down his mentality to the level of that of the public which read his paper and approved its causes.

In the final analysis, if he himself did not handle the story someone else would be assigned to do so. From any angle it was an exceptional feature and Corson wanted it. He, Kendrick, had made a reputation as a newspaperman; he failed never to bring some story back to the office,

seeing possibilities that others did not see; and he could not hazard his reputation now....

What a story! and what a lark it would be, too, adventuring down the bay, two or three weeks of it! and how he could write, what color he could put into the successive dispatches, what human interest in the picture of Moggs's loneliness and preposterous idealism! Phrases

71

already came into his mind, descriptions of yellow shores and green seas, romantic echoes from the time of the real Blackbeard..... Ah, yes, he would build up the story indeed and he would not simper about it. Newspapers shove their victims hand-tied and helpless into the water every day by the dozen. The community expects it, and on it he thrived, and no room at all for sympathy....

Smiling and enthusiastic beyond the need of feigning, Kendrick loped up the broad marble stairs to the city room and hurried to Corson's desk.

"Dave," he said, "we'll need a couple of weeks on that yarn but it'll take a banner when I've cleaned up on it ... with art. What would you think, now, of pirates back on the Chesapeake? real pirates, Jolly Roger and all? ... And I'm afraid it'll cost a little money. I'd better have an order, Dave; say, a hundred dollars, ... I tell you, it's a whale!"

Kendrick slapped Corson affectionately on the shoulder.

72

Chapter Five

I

THE ninth day of the moon, Higbie remembered from the Georgics, as he stood at his bedroom window in his nightshirt and watched three furtive lamiae post through the swimming garden, is the best for flight and the worst for thieves.... These must be klansmen.

Some intuition had aroused Higbie as he stretched and twisted out of the depths of slumber and had drawn him irresistibly to the casement. He had seen nothing out of the ordinary at first except that the moonlight was quite out of the ordinary and quivered with a prescience of scampering dryads that mocked as they fled and fauns that hungered after; and it filled Higbie with a tremulous half mad urgency to be himself out there questing. Then shortly the three eerie figures slipped from behind a shadow and drifted across the lawn.

Higbie chuckled when one of them caught his trailing draperies on a twig, pulled up short and fussed with the thing for a minute until impatient he ripped it free. Then the garden again was empty, and the inexplicable suspense that had kept him waiting was broken. Higbie rubbed his eyes and got back into bed.

II

NOT until breakfast did memory of the nocturnal visitation come to him. Now however it brought a sinister imputation that gave him pause. He had been no little thrilled, to be sure, to see the prowlers; the moonlight had lent enchantment to the thing—one could not, Higbie reflected with a smile, discern pantlegs under the robes in that argent twilight; and when the specters misted away he had felt only derision for such buffoon errantry. Now it occurred to him that the klansmen had held their witches' sabbath on his, Higbie's, property. He recalled Ruth's forebodings when he essayed to laugh her out of her dread of the klan, her story of floggings and

vengeance. Could they have been plotting last night some mischief against him? for ... Pudley it seemed was a klansman ...

Higbie kept the coffee hot until his orgiastic three cups had almost emptied the pot, hoping that Ruth would come walking in as she often did, by window or door as caprice moved her, and always more vivid and joyous. But Ruth did not come, and eventually Higbie resigned himself and went to the front porch for the mail. The only missive he found had been tacked on the door, and then across it and across the panel, sealing it in place, two sweeps of a broad brush had painted a cross. Higbie tore down the once-folded sheet, opened it out and read the following message, scrawled in a stumbling hand:

*Dr. Chafinch this is to warn you to take care your conduct dont continue to be
a disgrace to the naborhood*

74

*and an outraig to all God-feering citisens of Walbrook and particularly in
encuraging a spirit of revolt among our children and young peepol we warn you to
take this as a last warning. By the Kommittee of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.*

Higbie finished ... with eyes that were bleeding fire. He was beset by two impulses both of which he was at considerable effort to control. One of them quite astonished Higbie himself, betraying in his character a low strain of gamin which he would never have expected to find there: it was to thumb his nose and shout invectives at all Walbrook. The other Higbie recognized as a display of that animism vestigial in the human subconscious from the savage: it was to kick the offending door. In the end Higbie did neither of these things, but stepped into the hall, took down his dusty limp panama from the hatrack, put it resolutely on his head and set forth up the lane ... He was not to be deceived by misspelling and mispunctuation; that was merely part of the burlesquerie of the business!

Once around the bend trees were sparse and the road, coiling in the glare of the noonday sun, mounted a gradual acclivity all in full view from the Rev. Mr. Cyril Pudley's residence. The feeling that his advance was being watched from behind shutters there did not mitigate his wrath. His attack, indeed: for it was an attack, he told himself, kicking at a stone (stones also,

he remembered, have been heard to sermonize). Ire billowed black from the chimneys of his spirit. He must control this psychic smoke

75

nuisance. The interview must be a complete overthrow of his enemy, but without rant.... And sweating sturdily on up the slope he arrived at last at Pudley's gate.

Mr. Pudley himself opened the door, effusive with welcome. To this Higbie replied not a word. Stiffly he preceded the pastor into his study. Gingerly he rested the end of his spine, every vertebra bristling, on the edge of a straight chair. And when Mr. Pudley, still protesting the joy of the shepherd over the return of the lost sheep, had settled into his own comfortable swivel, Higbie produced the klan epistle.

"Mr. Pudley, I should like you to read this, and I demand to know at once what part you had in tacking it on my door," he said.

With raised eyebrows and a shrug of disavowal the minister conned the note. "On your door, Dr. Chaffinch? That was rather ... bold of them, I should think. They must be exceedingly determined, exceedingly ... resentful. And what an unpleasant greeting for you! But I admonished you, if I remember, my dear Dr. Chaffinch, that your manner of life these unhappy weeks——"

"Mr. Pudley," girmed Higbie, "enough of my manner of life! I insist upon knowing what part you took in this lawless affair!"

"What part I had in it! Dr. Chaffinch, truly, you become more and more difficult to understand. Surely you will not accuse me of being a member of the Ku Klux Klan!" With a smile Mr. Pudley handed back the missive, and Higbie, quite disconcerted by such nonchalance, thrust it mechanically into his pocket. "Besides," the

76

preacher continued, "the people responsible for this ... ah! ... warning would doubtless consider the affront was yours and not theirs. They employ the word 'disgrace,' I believe.... I'm sorry, Dr. Chaffinch, I'm very sorry, especially as it seems to have disturbed you. Are you faint, Dr. Chaffinch?"

Mens aequus.... Higbie gnawed the draggle of a moustache through a minute of torment. "Mr. Pudley," he declared evenly, "I have positive evidence that you are a member of the Ku Klux Klan. I was watching last night when you and your two companions came sneaking to my door. It

amazed me, Mr. Pudley, to see a man so sedate as yourself capering around in a nightshirt. You will remember, you tore your costume on a hedge?"

It was a hit, Higbie perceived, although the effect of it quite startled him; for the bituminous eye of Mr. Pudley blazed with such baleful flare, and the lean fists clenched until the knuckles went white.

"I have told you, Dr. Chaffinch, that your challenge is absurd. But since you force me to do so, I confess that my sympathies are in most instances entirely with that society in its campaign to drain the moral ulcers of our gin-bibbing, jazz-loving age."

"Footpads and submorons, sir!" shouted Higbie.

"Well, Dr. Chaffinch, at least there are probably in the society no old men who ... go wading ... with flowers on their heads.... If I felt as you do, Dr. Chaffinch, I should lay the matter before the police. I myself cannot help you, beyond suggesting again that a change in your conduct might appease your accusers."

77

It was an heroic task to cram back so many thunderheads and such green lightning into the one small heart, but Higbie did it. His voice was level when he resumed.

"I have but one more thing to say to you, Mr. Pudley. It concerns your daughter, Ruth. The message tacked on my door would seem to refer to her as she is the only companion of any age that I have had since Mrs. Chaffinch was taken from me. And ... that Sunday ... you appeared to be angered at finding her in my company. But your daughter has given me, in a beautiful womanly way quite incredible in a girl of her years, the most sensitive consolation. I esteem her as a child of singular loveliness and goodness, an idyllic spirit, Mr. Pudley. I trust you will believe me in that."

"I can well believe that you admire Miss Pudley. I regret that I have found it necessary, Dr. Chaffinch, to forbid her to go to your home."

"Mr. Pudley...!"

The minister lifted his hand. "Dr. Chaffinch, understand me. I do not admire Miss Pudley, much though I love her. She has been too long subject to influences of which I know you once would have disapproved, the hellish seductions of New York, that Babylon of the New World, that citadel of atheism and iniquity. The fault may have been mine. Too devoted to my labors for the salvation of others I may have neglected my daughter. I propose now to shelter her from any further corruption. And I cannot but

consider that you, Dr. Chaffinch, in your present deplorable contumacy, are not a proper person to help me recover my daughter for the Lord.”

78

“Mr. Pudley ...! If you please you may of course forbid your daughter to visit me. But I beg of you one thing. Don’t be too harsh in your efforts to force Ruth into a way of life that possibly she will never be content to follow! It is ... it is stamping down the white rose, Mr. Pudley; it is strangling the lark!”

Mr. Pudley put the tips of his fingers together and stared with cold malignity upon Higbie over the resulting arch beneath his chin. “Knowing my wishes in this matter, I hope, Dr. Chaffinch, you will not invite Miss Pudley again to your home. Good-day, Dr. Chaffinch.”

Higbie arose and took his hat and turned it round and round in his hands, trying to bring his jostled faculties into focus. “I give you my word, Mr. Pudley ... for her sake,” he said slowly. “But where she can’t come most certainly I won’t tolerate you.”...

At the door of the study Higbie turned, sputtering at last. “Mr. Pudley!” he exclaimed. “That for you, sir!”—and he flung his limp panama full at the startled divine. “Tri furcifer!” Higbie cried. Then leaving this awe-imposing epithet to echo on the smitten air of the pastor’s chamber, Higbie marched back again into the tropic noon.

III

DOWN the slope from the Pudley residence Higbie trudged, and the gradient favored his legs now, but he found retreat more difficult than advance had been. Then

79

it was marching into a hidden battery of malevolent stares, but now they peppered him volley by volley upon his back. He was dizzy with self-consciousness, so that his very feet would not work by themselves but had to be picked up deliberately each in turn and placed ahead. He felt like running at last to reach the shelter of trees and the bend in the road, and he was drenched and scarlet when at last he attained it.... Ruth was there waiting.

Up she jumped from the grass at the side of the road, vaulted the ditch and was at his side. But there were omens in her appearance that tripled Higbie's confusion. For the first time since he had met her she wore a hat. It was a charming hat of straw stained a sky-blue with a wide drooping brim, and Higbie had never seen anything so becoming on ruddy hair ... but why did she wear it? And, even as Ruth tucked her arm in his and smiled into his perplexed eyes, Higbie perceived that she carried a small bag of black leather, portentously swollen.

"What kept you so long, Higgles? I just about concluded you were beating papa up and I was wondering if I'd have time to run back and get in a swipe or two myself. You see, I was behind the door."

"When we were talking?"

"Yes, sir. For a little while. Then I went upstairs and threw some things into this thing..." —Ruth demonstrated the bag—"and I'm on my way."

Higbie stopped short, horrified. "But Ruth! you can't do that, you know!"

80

"Papa," said Ruth ignoring this remark, "is the meanest man in the world. He practises slurping his soup so he can do it louder and louder. He dunks his toast in his coffee and his bread in his tea. He wears out two Bibles a year just clutching at them when he thinks of me. And after the way he acted this morning, I'm through. Yes, sir; I'm running away. I'm going to be a bootlegger. Or a bob-haired bandit. And when they arrest me I'll tell them I'm the Rev. Mr. Cyril Pudley's daughter."

It was Ruth's volition, none of his own, that kept Higbie in motion homeward. Higbie was struggling merely to comprehend, his faculties had been so shuffled this feverish morning, and his stride fell helplessly into the rhythm of Ruth's.

"What, Higgles, are the laws for divorcing fathers? Or don't you suppose I've got grounds enough to bring suit to ... to annul papa? Don't let anybody come whimpering around me about marriage! You can annul a marriage if you get into it before you're sixteen. And I wasn't one when I got mixed up with papa."

Slowly on each side the trees jogged by, gradually the dust scuffed up by Higbie's somnambulist feet powdered his pants. Searching his sicklied mind Higbie found not an idea there, only a cluster of thumping facts like boils beneath the collar.

... “Then I’ll adopt you, Higgles, and we’ll both go into the bootleg business. Just think of it, Higbie! You ought to be able to get rid of a dozen bottles every morning, and wouldn’t the students come crowding into

81

your classes, though! And wouldn’t they learn their Latin, though! Hic ... hic ... haec...” Ruth giggled. “I’ll stay home and mind the still and bottle the hooch and you’ll sell it and we’ll all be hunky-dory.”...

It became apparent to Higbie that they were at his own gate. He wavered glances up and down the lane. He opened his mouth but could manage no more than a gurgle.

But Ruth laughed, a luculent cadenza of laughter that brought a twitch to Higbie’s lips in spite of his anxiety. And she tugged once more on his arm and drew him up the path with her to his door, still decorated with four slashes of red paint which had been the ends of the cross.

“You didn’t invite me, Higgles; I just came like I always do ... and you didn’t promise, you know, to chase me away!”

They were inside now, conspirators safe where none could spy on them, and Higbie could not help at last but join outright in Ruth’s jubilation. They stood in the hall and laughed and laughed; and then presently Ruth, tossing her bag and hat together on the divan, led away toward the rear.

“Now we’ve run away we might as well plan where we’re going,” she said, skipping through the dining-room. “O, Higgles, if you knew how free I feel! It’s just like getting over a crush, it makes you drunk with freedom! Try to catch me, Higgles! I’ll give you a kiss if you can catch me! And tonight let’s go wading in the moonlight! Shall we, Higgles?”

82

“But,” protested Higbie uncertainly, “we haven’t run away yet, Ruth. We’re just ... we’re just having a little joke, you know.”

“Yes we have, Higgles. You don’t know nothin’ yet. We’re as bad as bootleggers already.”

And Ruth swung open the kitchen door and went dancing out; and Higbie came after her, trying a little skip like hers behind her back: and there at the doorway they drew up both abruptly, perceiving ...

IV

... a dark-haired woman, prettily though inexpensively dressed in light yellow muslin, who had been gazing down into the Marvellous Vale when they burst out of the kitchen, and who greeted them now with a smile. She was sniffing a deep red rose and it impressed Higbie that she made a fetching picture thus. He acknowledged with a fidget Ruth's sotto voce challenge: "Why, Higgles ... you scalawag!... is this your past?"

In graciously inflected Marylandese the woman explained her presence. "I thought you'd be back right smart seein the door wasn't locked, I tried the knob jest for fun when nobody answered the bell, so I decided I'd wait around a bit and anyways my taxi was gone and I didn't have no way to get another until somebody got back and let me use their phone."

"My, but you're pretty with that flower ejaculated Ruth in candid impulsive tribute. "You ought to be Spanish and always have flowers in your hair."

83

"Lordy Lordy!" rippled the woman gaily. "Child what I'd give for hair like yours that'll never need them! ... And so," she continued, "I was visitin my son, that's Willie, out in Detroit and I see in the Chronicle one day that ad for a housekeeper and I cut it out jest for fun, and the other day when I was comin in on the B. and O. I thought I'd come out and see if you wanted somebody yet. But I suppose you must of got somebody by now, but I brought my bag anyhow in case you haven't, it's round on the side there, I didn't like to leave it in front where I couldn't take a look at it now and then."

Higbie cleared his throat but Ruth silenced him with a shush. "No, we haven't anybody yet and I'm sure you'll do beautifully," she said. "We only had six or seven darkey women apply and I wouldn't let Higbie take any of them. We need someone who can really be trusted to run the whole place, because I'm sure Higbie isn't capable of giving any directions. Will you tell us your name?"

"Amy Potter," averred the dark woman; "it's a good name down on the Eastern Shore which is where I come from. Yes indeedy, and my lamented husband..." —Higbie flushed at a covert nudge from Ruth— "...that was Chissy Potter, use to say there was a coat-of-arms to the family but I never see it. And I suppose you're his daughter?"

"Unfortunately—" began Higbie.

“Why, I’m a sort of daughter,” said Ruth. “I’m Ruth Pudley, you know, the Rev. Mr. Cyril Dudley’s disgraceful

84

off spring, only I’m about to divorce him and adopt Higbie; and this is Higbie: Dr. Higbie Chaffinch, And let’s all sit down on the cellar-door and talk a little while and then we’ll have lunch. I’ve just run away from home, you know, but I’m in no hurry to go any place. Indeed I don’t know just where I will go eventually, except tonight we’re going wading, and we’ve got to consider it very gravely. Only I think first of all you’d better tell us something about yourself, because ... you don’t look, really, as if you’d ever been a housekeeper before.”

Ruth was sitting down and lighting a cigarette, and Mrs. Potter lowered her well-turned figure most gracefully to the sloping seat beside Ruth. Higbie lunged at a momentary rift in the conversation.

“The situation, Mrs. Potter, is this,” he blurted, keeping his eyes rigidly on the processes of cleaning, filling and igniting his pipe: “Early last month I buried Mrs. Chaffinch. She was a natural, a born housewife and mother and we were not accustomed to having any help around the place. I was quite reluctant to ... to invite anyone here. But obviously it was too much for me to keep house by myself——”

“And I couldn’t be here all the time, especially as I hadn’t run away then,” interpolated Ruth. “You ought to have seen the mess Higbie was in!”

“It was too much for me to keep house by myself,” iterated Higbie desperately asserting his manhood, “and I shrank from the alternative of taking lodgings, and I concluded——”

85

“You wanted a good cook! Yes indeedy!” Mrs. Potter nodded understandingly. “I know jest how you felt. Somebody to let you get away from the house now and then and forget your troubles, and that’s jest the way I look at it too, it was only last fall that my Chissy passed out, he took sick with the flu and I did all I could for him but it wasn’t no use; and I says to myself, ‘Amy, there’s no good you pinin away down here if Chissy’s goin to be happy up there in heaven, because it wouldn’t be like Chissy to be happy if he looked down and see you weepin and troublin down here.’ So I let out my house in Centreville and got myself some new dresses and

went to spend the winter with Willie, he's in Detroit now sellin flivvers and makin money hand over fist, Lordy it's a crime!"

"Frugal but wholesome and—" Higbie hurriedly essayed.

"That's just what he needs, Mrs. Potter," Ruth counseled enthusiastically. "Three good hearty meals a day, and his laundry taken care of, and no more worry about the house."

"I wasn't worrying about the house!" Higbie protested. "As a matter of fact I was enjoying——"

"There's nothin comforts a man like a good feed," agreed Mrs. Potter. "That's what I use to tell Willie when he got fired from the garage, that was before he went to Detroit: it's all right to take a drink when you're on top of the world but when you're blue lay off the booze. Yes indeedy and I don't think I would of come if you hadn't said you wanted a good cook. You see I couldn't

86

stay any longer with Willie, after all it was his house and if I didn't like the way he lived it was up to me to clear out, so I decided I'd go to see Niagara Falls, I always wanted to see Niagara so here I says to myself is your chance; well, then I went to Coney Island and after that I took a trip to Boston, and here I been livin in hotels for ages and I was gettin hungry for good home cookin (and not the kind Willie's wife Sue does either) and all of a sudden I remembered that ad which I had kind of an idea I might want to see about, though I never been a housekeeper before but I kept house, and what's the difference I says to myself whether it's one kind of a house or another? And if I went home to Centreville, well, I couldn't cook any better and I would have nobody to eat it with.... But what, child, do you mean by you runnin away?" digressed Mrs. Potter with a sudden laugh. "You don't really mean you're runnin away?"

Out it came in a torrent, the whole story of Ruth's luckless paternal relations, the disaster at Bryn Mawr and the menace of the klan, punctuated by commiserating pore-dears from Mrs. Potter.

"I think you better stay right here for a while, that's what I think, honey, and one of these days Mr. Pudley'll come around on his hands and knees and jest beg you to forgive him." Mrs. Potter took Ruth's hand and caressed it. "Not that I've got anythin against preachers but it must be sort of hard to be their daughter. And don't you worry about the Kew Klux Klan, I know a man in Centreville they thought was moonshinin, and maybe he

was, I don't know, but they come to his house one night and he went out all by himself with a bottle which he made as if it was a pistol and they all run away scared to death. I bet there wouldn't any klansman say anythin to me!"

"Amy, you love!" sighed Ruth. And, "Higbie, I think I'd better help Amy upstairs with her things. I'll put her in the spare room ... and I'll take Martha's, if you don't mind."

V

THE grocery wagon arrived at three and it took the boy two trips to lug in so many bundles. The ice-man followed hard on the grocer's heels, and then there was an hour's hiatus before the butcher's lop-sided cart lurched through the Chaffinch gate. Meanwhile within the house was such a sweeping and scrubbing and hauling and pushing and stir that the walls quite bulged with energy; and Higbie, who sulked from room to room for a while in vain endeavor to keep a seigneurial eye on this regardless disalignment of boundaries and things, finally allowed himself to be chivvied out on the front porch. There he collapsed into a wicker chair. Heu me, what a moil was made of his life! and what was he now to do about it?...

Two little boys in befeathered khaki Indian costumes were playing massacre across the lane, whooping with palms that palpitated on their mouths. Higbie watched and listened vaguely. Higbie was searching his conscience,

turning it inside out like a dusty pocket; and in spite of all the recriminations of the Rev. Mr. Pudley, in spite of visions of what would have been Minnie's astoundment and Martha's dismay, he could shake nothing more ugly out of it than a few flakes of tobacco. What! was he to have allowed Ruth to go on alone, without refuge or champion into the city? He could not do that!...

And there, perii! was Pudley himself swinging along toward town. What a comic-strip caricature of the clergy he was in his black long coat, gaunt face, grim hat, the great hands dangling at his sides, trousers flapping

around the lean legs, coat-tails bobbing behind his knees? Ichabod! ... Higbie half arose, feeling some trepidation lest Pudley see him and come in, and catch some note of Ruth's gay chatter from the house. But without a glance the minister passed by. Higbie relaxed, more desolate than before.

Stealthily, stealthily from the ambuscade of a fence quite covered with wild honeysuckle crept the two urchins. Still concealed behind a tree they fitted blunt arrows to strings. Higbie jerked into vigilance. They were aiming at the preacher! A shout of warning leaped to his lips, but before he could utter it there was a glint of slender shafts, and Pudley bit the dust.

Not literally did Mr. Pudley bite the dust. He glanced around, his face in a ferment, and on the first impulse of fury even took a few paces in pursuit of his assailants, who scuttled off across the meadows with shrill ululations of triumph. With upraised fist Mr. Pudley menaced

89

them from the lane, and then he remembered where he was and glanced toward the Chaffinch dwelling.

Now an unholy inspiration came upon Higbie, who found himself hopping with delight, for he cupped his hands and shouted, "O, Elisha! Go up, thou bald-head! and where are the bears?"

Speechless the minister resumed his march. Higbie ,watched the gangling black figure until it dwindled away beneath the trees. Feeling extraordinarily refreshed and quickened after his revery on the porch, he ventured back into the house. And what a dusted and tidied orderliness had supervened in his home!... chair and divan relieved of the old papers and casual garments and books and odds and ends that had accumulated in them, windowshades drawn to a neat level, flowers on the mantel....

"Ruth!" he called up the front stairs, where the rumor of battle indicated the enemy had been driven to its last stronghold. "I've an idea! That fellow Moggs ... the Moggs Foundation, you remember. He might think of some plan for you, something to do. We could have him over for dinner tomorrow, if you'd like."

90

Chapter Six

I

EVEN down in the deepest cellar they penetrated, those enticing odors which from early afternoon had been seeping every hour sweetlier and more intoxicating from the barred precincts of the kitchen. Hardly had the luncheon dishes been washed before Mrs. Potter interned herself behind the swinging door, with ample warning she should not be disturbed. And in a state of growing anxiety Higbie had loitered through the house, until finally a peep anew between the covers of *Treasure Island* had sent him to the basement in quest of a book.

From some years back the memory of the book had lingered. It was an essay scholarly enough but on a thesis which at that time he had considered quite inconsequential, almost frivolous. It was *Die Seeräuberei in der Vorseit* by one Ludwig Glunz, and it contained material on the Cilician pirates and Isidorus, the contemporary Blackbeard, which Moggs would surely enjoy. It had been removed from his study, Higbie suspected, during one of those bookshelf upheavals that followed every important purchase; and it had probably been stored away in the cellar.

On a dusty box beneath the little electric bulb that, dangling from a rafter, struggled feebly to dispel the

91

glooms of the far-flung basement Higbie sat. From another packing box he extracted one by one an odd assortment of books, some of them quite forgotten, some of them stirring his risibilities at the first glance at their covers, some intriguing him to con a page or two ... And here was one that gave him a pucker. The title grinned at him with lewd joviality. It was the *Satyricon* of Titus Petronius Arbiter, a musty and corrupt work by a man whose grammar was bad and whose language vulgar and loose as his story. A monstrous concatenation of obscenity and cynicism, a book that Minnie would never permit on the shelves even of his own study, and that Higbie had never deemed worth championing against her.... He turned a few leaves, fleeing.... Trimalchio's banquet....

Dormice, fattened on chestnuts and pickled in honey! How the old Romans, edepol, ransacked the world and prodded their imaginations for gastronomic dainties!... Flamingoes' tongues! And birds, little birds of all kinds: thrushes and figpeckers and snipes and blackbirds and heath-cocks—to say nothing of the imperial peacock.... And wines with every course. Caecubum, from Campania; Falernian, the brand called Faustianum, from Sinuessa—amber Falernian! That was a good line about the parvenue Trimalchio's Falernian! Falernum Opinianum annorum centum.... Wines....

Why to be sure, there was wine in this very cellar, any quantity of wine; and old, mature vintage as well! Perhaps not a century old, but thirty years or forty. Minnie had put it up. Every fall it was her custom to

92

gather the grapes from those straggling vines half down the hill and add three or four bottles, carefully labeled and dated, to the increasing accumulation in the fruit-cellar. It was in case of illness, she explained; and because there was little illness in the Chaffinch home the shelf had become annually heavier and more crowded until, five or six years ago, she had dispensed with making more. But once, Higbie remembered, when a severe cold had confined him to his bed, Minnie had prepared some wine jelly for him.... It all came back quite vividly now, and before he knew it Higbie was on his feet.

The bottles were there quite covered with dust. Higbie's heart thumped wildly as he took down one of them, brushed off the label and read, in Minnie's familiar chirography, "Fall of 1903." Irresolute he stood a moment but an intolerable curiosity consumed him. He opened his penknife and dug into the cork with the slender blade, guiltily hearkening from time to time for footfalls on the basement stairs. And now it was open and now it was tilted and now ... a scarlet bead in Higbie's gray moustache. He licked it off, and clucked his tongue on the roof of his mouth in the approved gesture of tasting. A dry, tart warmth in the throat. It is doubtless quite unintoxicating, Higbie reassured himself, a mere grape-juice; and he tried another swig.

Half an hour later, when Mrs. Potter came seeking him down from the kitchen, Higbie was back on the packing box, Petronius on his knees, the bottle in one hand and his pipe in the other.

"Wherever have you been?" she exclaimed peering

around from behind the furnace. “My Lord of mercy don’t you know you’ll spoil your eyesight readin by that light? If I’d a known where you was I’d of brought a lamp. And it’s gettin on toward six now and we ought to be gettin dressed, I’m jest after pressin that black suit of yours, it’s all right, jest a little wore that’s all, it’s on your bed.”

What unexampled thoughtfulness, Higbie meditated, and what a most agreeable and charming creature Mrs. Potter was to be sure, and how efficient no less! “My dear Mrs. Potter!” he said getting up from his box. “Your consideration touches me deeply, and I feel I should tell you how fortunate I count myself in having ... not someone like you, Mrs. Potter ... but you as our companion and ... presiding genius tonight.”

“Lordy Lordy Dr. Chaffinch!” and Mrs. Potter’s genial cachinnation echoed under the low ceiling. “But what have you got there? is that wine?”

Higbie shook the bottle, cocking an ear. It was still half full. “I came down to look for a book, and ... I found wine. A whole shelf of it, Mrs. Potter. And it occurred to me that we might have a pitcher of it with our dinner. What do you think?”

“I was thinkin myself, Dr. Chaffinch, that that was jest about all that was missin for tonight, there isn’t nothin like it with fowl, and a cup of it before you sit down to table always makes things move more lively. You show me where it is and then run upstairs and get shaved, Ruth’s out of the bathroom and I’ll want to get in there myself before long.”

II

FAR from his original intention, Higbie reflected, as he scraped the smooth hot lather from his cheek, was wine for this evening. But nothing these days seemed to go quite as he intended.... Higbie brought the keen blade carefully around the corner of his moustache.... Why do men wear moustaches? Higbie fingered the gray tress of his, and speculated on how it would look if he twisted it stiffly up instead of allowing it ... thus ... to droop around his mouth. Startlingly fierce would be his mien with such long whiskers! Teutonic, imperial ...

No, nothing quite as he intended. In the beginning he proposed a quietly convivial dinner with Moggs, at which Ruth could make his acquaintance and ascertain what aid the Moggs Foundation offered runaway daughters.... But was it altogether useless to run away? Higbie lifted his dripping visage from the basin and demanded of his effigy in the mirror an answer to this question. He himself had run away, he was a truant from society ... from the church, from all the proprieties and agencies of decorous living. And he appeared to be succeeding. At any rate Pudley had not caught up with him! Pudley had bit the dust.... Higbie snickered at the mirror, impressed by a certain faun-like manner he saw in himself....

A man, thought Higbie, lifting his chin to the scrape of the blade on his throat, is as old as he feels. Looks have nothing to do with it, but I don't look so very old at that. My real age. What is my real age? Sixty-

95

six. No, sixty ... something. Men ... tortoises live to be one hundred and twenty-five. One hundred and twenty-five, that is such a fatuous estimate. Men live to be three and four and sometimes five hundred years old! ... I mean, thought Higbie, tortoises.

There was a jar on the medicine-chest. It read "Crème Etienne" and the label proclaimed it unparalleled, incidentally to more feminine uses, after shaving. Minnie never used cosmetics. Higbie took a little on his finger-tips and smelled it, and then tested it curiously on his tingling cheek. Suave to the smart....

And it was Moggs that gave the first shove against the solid constructure of his intention, by proposing to bring that boy along. The minute Ruth heard about the boy she broached the matter of clothes, and was all for a midnight raid on her father's house to pick up certain details of wardrobe, a silly project that must surely have ended in disaster.... Ah, youth! Higbie struck a benignly prophetic pose for himself in the mirror and essayed a smile at once gently amused and tolerant ... *lumen placidum*. How preposterous are its most earnest plans, how cheerfully regardless of the possibilities!... Higbie demonstrated a few more smiles of different varieties....

And then Mrs. Potter ... Higbie laid a neat strip of toothpaste along his brush and bent yet again over the basin ... came to the rescue. "Lordy I've got a whole bag of close that'll fit you fine, honey! Sue's close, that's

Willie's wife, she's jest about your size and I knew they wouldn't fit me but she give them to me and there they

96

were and I thought well someday I could let them out so as I could wear them. There's a green party dress that'll look right sweet on you!" ... Dear Mrs. Potter! What an amazing creature, so personable and so energetic, an air of charming indolence in the parlor and a bustle in the kitchen that made one's heart pant. Sympathetic, magnanimous, considerate. To think of her pressing his suit! ... *"Dear Mrs. Potter, do you see the moon through the filigrane of that locust tree? How she clings there, Amy, loath to depart? But just a week ago she hurried always, and now, Amy, she lingers to watch you wandering through these sylvan glades, waiting to hear..."*...

Mrs. Potter would be waiting to bathe. Of course. Higbie threw on his bathrobe and proceeded to his chamber, the faint odor of the pomade drifting dulcetly to his nostrils from chin and cheek.... Clean white linen, black suit pressed and scrupulously brushed....

It was Ruth gave the second shove against his tower, and Mrs. Potter, lovely one, the third. Mrs. Potter, confronting the prospect of visitors and clothes, introduced considerations of menu that mangled Higbie's threadbare ethics of abstemiousness into a sad flat shirt. It had quite frightened the joy out of him at first, to see this idea which he had lighted for a chaste taper go rocketing up into the skies. And then he himself, discovering the wine, laid violent hand on his already toppling original edifice and strewed it over the plain.

Wine ... pondered Higbie, fretting with a cuff-button.... There had been no wine on other occasions during the past forty-five years when he played host.

97

But on these occasions the Dr. Inchlings and the Murchthaws were guests, or the minister, or Minnie's colleagues in the Ladies' Aid Society on the eve of their annual meeting: Minnie's friends. The capacity of host had been more or less obligatory on him and ex officio. He accepted it without demurring, partook sparingly of the dry-baked fowl and the tricolored ice-cream which Minnie served, and bade his guests farewell at ten o'clock with a dissembled tremor of relief. Tonight all was different. From Higbie himself of his own volition had the invitations emanated. By every

olfactory token there was nothing gothic in Mrs. Potter's culinary arrangements. And ... there was wine.

Horace sang of wine ... meditated Higbie, starting on the other cuff-button ... and so did Tibullus and Catullus and Virgil and Theocritus and the rest of them. Cicero himself, in that note to Testa which had always troubled Higbie with its implications, mentioned going home from a banquet somewhat ... winey. Vinolentus. And even the august Seneca, provided that one did not become positively drunk, had no objection——

At this juncture came an excited tattoo on his door. Higbie in shirt-sleeves and suspenders opened it a crack and peered out. It was Ruth ... Ruth gone faery entirely at last, Ruth more ravishing in a low-cut gown of Nile green than memories of Atthis and Nausicaa, madcap Ruth a latter-day mænad winged and dizzy with life. She held forth a bottle like the torch of Liberty.

"Higgles, you darling! Where'd you get it? And how do you like my dress? And ... why, you've got

98

cold cream all over your face, you funny child!" She put back her head and laughed again. "You have to rub it in, you know. I'll bet you've been tippling all by yourself."

"It's ... it's hardly more than grape-juice," Higbie explained. "I've had half a bottle of it and it hasn't affected me in the least. But it'll be better than nothing of course. Wine——"

On the expectant hour the doorbell jangled.

III

..."I'm afraid I really ought to apologize for it," said Higbie lifting his cup with the rest. "It isn't much more than grape-juice. Why, I've had half a bottle of it and it doesn't affect me in the least!"

"But Chaffinch, my dear fellow!" interjected Moggs, quaffing. "It is delicious! The bead, Chaffinch! and the bouquet! Hm-m-m-m-m?"

And presently they were seated at table, with all of Minnie's cherished cut-glass and silver there lavishly to glitter and gleam, and cups attentively refilled by the radiant Mrs. Potter, a wonder of loveliness now in that red gown of filmy stuff to set off her dark Corinthian beauty. The white napery,

the mass of roses in the white bowl. Chicken a la Maryland, succulent and never before so tender; cucumbers fried in crisp sweet slices and salsify in cream and mashed potatoes sensuously smooth and rich; hot bread, and how many unheard of condiments and relishes!

99

Higbie could hardly eat for joy of watching his guests do so. It was his banquet, these were his friends, they deferred to him with smiles of warm fellowship, they raised their cups to him time and time again by name, they laughed at his quips and invoked his erudition. They liked him and they were having a good time with him, life was surging to crests. And Higbie laughed surely as he never had laughed before at Kendrick's impertinent young anecdotes and Ruth's syncopated whimsies, at Mrs. Potter's arch comment and Moggs's jocund "Ah ... ha ... ha!" He loved these people; and one time he leaned forward and held his goblet high over the table and said, "To my friends ... bene vos, bene nos!... and ... I'm so glad you're here tonight He drank it alone and when Ruth got up impulsively and came over and kissed him it made him Horace. The Sabine farm ...

There followed alligator pears drenched with the richest of garlic dressings, and there was pineapple ice; and for coda cheese and coffee. And wine.

Moggs developed a roguishness that sent the whole company into spasms of mirth. Without a word of warning he made a great play of plucking a hair from Mrs. Potter's head ... Higbie was on the very point of furious denunciation before he perceived the hoax ... and pretended to balance it on his nose. With arms spread and visage tense with apparent effort he rose from his chair, still balancing the imaginary hair, and went into the parlor and lay down on his back—still balancing the hair!—and got up with it again, and then let it

100

topple, caught it skilfully in his hands as it fell, and waited bowing for applause. "Macte!" shouted Higbie loud as anyone. So gratified was Moggs with this ovation that he filched a new hair from Ruth and began the trick all over again. This time it impressed Higbie as funnier than at first, he caught on better to the burlesquerie, and he laughed until he ached.

Then Kendrick sang. It was a sailors' chantey, he explained, this ballad of the apt young woman of Amsterdam; and it did indeed have a lusty

buccaneer humor which, Higbie suspected, approached from time to time the fescennine. But Higbie did not perceive anything egregious in it and himself joined roundly in the chorus, and they all pounded the table with their fists singing:

A-rovin, a-rovin,
Since rovin's been my ru-eye-in;
No more I'll go a-ro-ho-vin
With you, fair maid!

When the chantey was over, "Bebemus," suggested Higbie with an inspiration, "Græco more! Let us drink in the Greek manner! Mrs. Potter, bene tibi: to your very best health! I must now drink six tablespoonsful of wine, one for each letter in her name, and pass the glass to Mrs. Potter; and she in turn will pledge the cup to someone present or absent and drink accordingly."

The plaudits of the company over this archaeological swizzle-game were pleasant in Higbie's ears as he drained the chalice. The idea had to be explained three or four times to Mrs. Potter, who protested merrily that she felt "kinda light" already. She plied a speculative eye.

101

"Chaffinch," she said tentatively: "C-h-a-f-f-i-n-c-h." She counted the letters off on her fingers. "Lordy that's a big drink and I feel kinda light already. Let's see, there's Ruth and that means P-u-d-l-e-y ... six. I guess it'll have to be ... Mr. Moggs."

Higbie felt a certain desolate dwindling of content and it was in his mind to propose that first names also be permitted; that would settle Hiltonshurley. But Mrs. Potter was already ladeling out her five measures, and "Benny tibby, Mr. Moggs!" she said with a sparkle.

Audibly Moggs counted out his draught. Would it be Ruth? or Kendrick?

"Mrs. Potter!" announced Moggs with a bow that struck Higbie as altogether too flattering: "Whose charm no less than her genius has contributed to make this banquet lyric! Hm-m-m-m? To her my compliments and sincere wishes for prosperity and joy and many years of them to come!"

Back to Mrs. Potter went pitcher and cup, but she waved them away with a giggle. "I feel kinda light already," she protested. "You do it, Ruth, honey!"

One and two and three and four and ... Higbie fidgeted embarrassedly with his napkin and could not bring himself to watch Ruth's mischievous enumeration ... and five and six and seven and eight!... and nine and ten and eleven ...

"Higbie!" ejaculated Ruth. "There's eight for Chaffinch and two for the doctor and one for the period. I can count punctuation, can't I, Higgles? So here's to Hig, to darling Hig! I love him!"

102

Then boisterous indeed were the cheers and the clapping of hands and stamping of feet, as Higbie stammered and blushed and forced himself into guffaws palpably artificial in the effort to conceal the upwelling of his emotions and the blink of tears at his eyes. So wild was the demonstration that none of the company noticed it until the doorbell had been rung three times, each time more sharply and imperious. The third alarum was a javelin in the heart of the merriment and brought it down. In the hush that followed, Higbie and Ruth and Mrs. Potter gazed at each other appalled by an apprehension to which Ruth at last gave voice.

"Good God, it's papa!" she whispered.

IV

MRS. POTTER started from her chair but Higbie insisted he would go. As he passed through the living-room he observed that the clock on the mantel registered eleven-thirty ... a godless hour. But did not the marble Roman indulge in protracted banquets, in a period when three hours at table (Pliny bore witness!) indicated an almost self-mortifying parsimony of time? Higbie barked his shin on a rocking chair. Hercle! It would be advisable soon to reduce his potations. He was not in the least affected, no indeed! But after two or three more cups ...

The Rev. Mr. Pudley confronted him towering, the genius of darkness hunted away by the moon. For a moment the two stared at each other.

103

"You are dining, Dr. Chaffinch, late tonight," remarked the divine.

Cool magic of the flooded garden.... Higbie gazed past his accuser into the moonlight and he could think of nothing at first to reply. They were dining late. "In Rome—" he began.

"In Walbrook, Dr. Chaffinch, the sound of revelry by night affronts the unwonted ear. You are not drinking?"

"Seneca..." Higbie essayed moistening his lips. Mild and fragrant with unseen flowers was the night, more gentle than the hard stars, more intimate than robust noon, beckoning, all-approving. Why should any stranger beyond his door be concerned whether or not Higbie and his friends did pledge devotion in the juice of the vine? He kept foot and fancy within his borders, let others do likewise....

"Dr. Chaffinch, I have come for my daughter." Mr. Pudley was suddenly harsh with evangelical menace. "You are drunk, Dr. Chaffinch. And I demand to know where my daughter is!"

One hand on the door and one on the jamb Higbie defied his challenger. "Your conduct, Mr. Pudley, is becoming more incomprehensible every day," he asseverated with a frown. "Surely you don't charge me with abducting your daughter! If I felt as badly as you do about it, I'd——"

With a gesture of ravens at his vitals Pudley flung from the porch. Down the path toward the lane he raged, tossing fist after fist into the moon. And now he was gone; and Higbie, rather dizzy as his own fury abated,

104

craving the coolness of the night on his inflamed cheek, stepped out and closed the door softly behind him....

V

... "But where," exclaimed Ruth, "is Higgles?"

It was twenty minutes since he answered the bell, Moggs reported, glancing at his watch. Moggs went to the door, Ruth could hear him calling ... and he came back with anxiety plain on his face, and not a trace of Higbie to be found. Then to the back door went Mrs. Potter, Moggs hurrying after her as escort, and they made a circuit of the house, calling ... and returned blank and agitated.

"Lordy Lordy it's all right, of course; nobody's goin to kidnap him and I guess he jest went for a walk, he was kinda light I guess and he took a walk up the road to get ahold of himself, he didn't act like he was used to

drinkin.” Mrs. Potter chuckled but without that subtle lift which is the certificate of genuineness.

Ruth felt her heart clutch ... and hurry. “I’m afraid,” she whispered. “You don’t know what papa’s capable of and those damned klansmen. And if papa had heard me in here...! He’s the Uplift and that means the Inquisition, the Methodist Inquisition. I’m going to call the police.”

“No!” Kendrick’s veto was crisp and authoritative. “If Dr. Chaffinch has gone for a walk he’ll be back, and it isn’t likely under any circumstances that violence would be planned tonight, with such a moon. If you call the

105

police you’ll have a swarm of newspapermen out here in ten minutes, and photographers, and in the morning it’ll be all over page one. I’m not a reporter tonight, I’m not assigned to any story here and I don’t have to say a word; but if you call the cops ... that’ll make me a reporter again. Don’t you see? Why don’t we hunt for Dr. Chaffinch?”

Ruth jumped to her feet. “Come on! Amy, you and Moggs take the lane and go up and down it; I know the valley better than you do, and I think he may have gone down there, he loves it so. And Kenny, you come with me. We’ll all be back here in half an hour.”...

So they were outside now in the panic murmurous night, Ruth leading down the slippery path that dropped into the Marvellous Vale. They made haste, silent, and it was heartening to have Kendrick’s firm clasp on her hand sustain her down the treacherous slope. And now they reached the level, they walked beside the Luminous Water side by side ... and hand in hand.

And it was easy now to put faith in Kendrick’s assurances, to take comfort in his protecting virility; there was such comfort in the moon and such assurance in the guileless trickle and splash of the falls, Luminous Water tossing there beyond the willows and the druidic old sycamores, shimmering, englamored. Many things could happen in this passionate night of all nights, many a magic emprise down wild dingle and glade with the barefoot winds, ringing with the mad prothalamium of cricket and tree-toad; things were surely to happen ... the breath of them in ones breast!... but nothing tragic.

106

... List, sweet Moon, where I learned my loving.... By the falls they paused now, where the grassy brink shelved down to the water; they sat on the grass and behind her head she felt the strength of his shoulder, his breath was on her cheek.

“Ruth! ... Ruth...”

Tomorrow? Lie of senility that hides from its own past. There is no tomorrow, there is no yesterday, there is but now and adoration. Through her closed eyes the moonlight seemed to filter and through her it dripped, the words in her ear were moonlight.... “You are the moon, you bemist me!”... Like Debussy, queer cool piling of sound without movement, tremor of leaves and passionate tremor of caught light in them, crying of water, cry of the moon....

“Ruth...?”

Is it for me you hunger? Beauty is to be hungered for. Your body quivers and is yet all the more strong. You would make me yours but I make you mine, I the pool that desires the lips of the singer, I the river that receives the bodies of the swift runners and they leave me refreshed and renewed, I the space into which the swallow dips.... Use me, you the man and I the woman, you the share and I the field; it is for this the generations prepared me, to bear you upon my breast, to be your vessel, to be possessed and made fertile and sowed with seed.... Do you hear me?... “Kendrick!... Ah, Kendrick!”... It is Life itself in me that cries to you ...

Cool yielding of the damp grass, and overhead the

107

tangle of branches and leaves in a dark pattern against the moon ... and there a firefly, fairy paranymp, carries her green little taper ... and there the drooping moon ...

108

Chapter Seven

I

SOMEONE was shaking him by the shoulder, and Higbie sat up abruptly out of his dreams, plunging his head thus into the spiked branches of the rose-bush from which a spray of petals shook on his pate. He lay down again striving for memory of the night. It was broad morning now indeed, the slant of the sun was gaining toward the perpendicular. A caravan of ants went trekking across his chin and he brushed them off with a grimace. But a hand once more gripped and shook him, and Higbie looked out from under the rose-bush and saw that it was an officer of the law. Behind the cop towered the morose figure of the Rev. Mr. Cyril Pudley.

Ah, yes, he remembered now. The midnight visit of the minister interrupting the revel, his own defiance and Pudley's departure with that frenetic popping of fists. And how then he strolled out on the lawn in the moonlight, craving its quietude for a moment, and how he sat down beside this bush to meditate the vicissitudes into which Minnie's demise had plunged him. Here apparently he had gone to sleep. Walbrook was witness. Interii miser!

"What's a matter there gruffed the law, while the

109

boiling visage of the minister peered from behind the blue uniform. "You sick or sompmhm?"

"No, I am not sick," replied Higbie endeavoring somehow to strike a dignity of accent that would mitigate the extreme indignity of his posture and place. "I have been sleeping and why you should come poking around and disturb me I don't understand."

Perplexedly the cop scratched his head. "This preacher here said you was probaly killed or maybe drunk most likely. And it didn't look right to me to see you lyin under this here bush and people stoppin and starin in and I didn't want to leave you lay if you was ... dead or sompmhm."

Higbie reconnoitred. An urchin was coming across the lane at full gallop, eager to be in at the death. Higbie hurriedly dragged himself out

from under the rosebush and got to his feet.... And there went Mrs. Murchthaw waddling toward town with horror-stricken precipitation. Higbie encarnadine tried to acknowledge composedly her wry nod but knew the attempt was sorry.

“Of course,” resumed the law, “if it’s all right——”

“Certainly it’s all right!” Higbie snapped. “This is my own place, isn’t it? If I choose on occasion ... on a hot night ... to nap on my lawn, it’s none of your business. You will please leave these premises at once.”

“Well, it ain’t quite natural not as I see it for an old man like you to go lyin around under the bushes hot night or no hot night,” the cop defended vigorously.

“On the contrary it is perfectly natural. And you,

110

sir, are a provincial oaf and I shall report your impudence to the authorities.”

“Aw nuts!” blurted the cop, and he turned his back and stamped away swinging his espantoon with the vehemence of disgust. Higbie likewise faced about toward his castle. But now Pudley became voluble in protest, appealing from one to the other. “But officer, my daughter!... Dr. Chaffinch, I demand my daughter!... Officer, your duty!”

Not until the very Chaffinch gate did the policeman halt. “Nuts!” he bellowed, and then he spat, and then wheeled up the lane toward town with Pudley gesticulating behind him. Higbie pushed tight his door against the world.

II

SILENCE crammed the house. Of course, of course; his guests had departed in due time, Mrs. Potter and Ruth had retired. They had written him, Higbie, down for a lunatic no doubt. But as he hesitated a cadence of trombone snore coming from the living-room indicated the presence of life there at least. Higbie tiptoed and looked in.

On the lounge, he perceived, sprawled Kendrick....

Apprehensive Higbie crept upstairs. The door of his own chamber hung ajar, and on the bed Higbie saw the tangible half of Moggs in the gaping unloveliness of spiritual vacancy: Moggs fully dressed, black trousers

coated knee-high with dust. But Mrs. Potter's door and Ruth's down the corridor were prudently fast.... Higbie

111

continued on to the bathroom where, noiselessly throwing in the lock, he sat down on the edge of the tub and grappled with the facts.

Momentous in its proportions was this new scandal. The unprecedented carousal spilling its ribaldry on the tranquil Walbrook midnight would have been bad enough by itself. The spectacle of him snoozing supine beneath a rose-bush on the front lawn, daybreak gilding his nose, made it utterly and forever unexplainable. And now before long the police would be bashing in his door and would discover here the minister's runaway daughter! Visions of criminal court, of penitentiary and dungeon, of ball-and-chain and the stone-pile, affrighted him. The University would publicly and shamefully repudiate him, society would ostracize him. He was Babylon down. And yet what evil thing had he done?...

The alarm-clock. Higbie glanced at his watch; it was half past nine. Footsteps came nearing down the hallway. Higbie opened the door and stepped out ... thereby nearly startling Amy Potter, dark hair flowing over the shoulders of her yellow kimono, into flight.

"Lordy Dr. Chaffinch!" she gasped. "Is it really you, Dr. Chaffinch! Where can you have been? Why we went all over the county lookin for you ever since you went to answer that doorbell and we heard you talkin to the minister, thisaway and thataway we went callin for you until it was almost daylight, we thought we would of had to get the police except for Kendrick sayin it'd get in the papers. And what a sight you are, Dr. Chaffinch, why you're all covered with dust and you've got roses in your

112

hair!" Mrs. Potter chirruped so merrily that Higbie must needs smile as he scraped three petals from his thin locks.

But Higbie shook his head bodefully. "I'm afraid I've brought disgrace on us all, Mrs. Potter. I went to sleep under a rose-bush on the lawn, and the minister himself found me there and brought a policeman to wake me."

It was minutes before Mrs. Potter could reply, such gusts swept through her. "Pshaw!" she laughed. "You get yourself washed up and put on a clean shirt and I'll hustle down and get some black coffee, that'll pick you up, and you should worry, you ain't drowned."

By the time Higbie came downstairs, enheartened by hot water and fresh linen, Kendrick and Ruth were already up and sipping. They greeted him jubilantly. Mrs. Potter, herself still prey to reminiscent convulsions, had reported the manner of Higbie's disappearance and awakening.

"But why didn't you tell us and we'd all have joined you there, and what a sight that would have been for papa!" laughed Ruth; and Kendrick suggested, "We'll have to call you Li Po, Dr. Chaffinch. That Chinese poet, you know, who wrote verses about getting crocked and waking up in the morning under a rose-bush. Was it a lot of fun?"

Warm was the welcome, and the coffee had such an aroma, and the hot bread that Mrs. Potter even now took out of the oven embraced so meltingly the golden butter! "I just fell asleep somehow," Higbie iterated. All was merriment and reassurance, and Higbie's dismal forebodings quite faded, and he was beginning himself to feel,

113

albeit not yet entirely recovered from his embarrassment, something of a hero ... when the swinging door opened to admit Moggs, with tread so conspirant and mien so perturbed that even Ruth's hilarity was chilled.

"Ssh!" said Moggs. He went to the window and cautiously from it searched back garden, hedge and locust copse. Then he pulled down the shade. "I remember we were visited last night by Ruth's father, the minister, and I do believe we denied she was with us here. Hm-m-m-m-m? But just this moment from the bathroom as I was at my ablutions I saw an ominous figure slink down toward the rear of this house, behind the hedge. A tall gaunt man in black. Black hat, black coat, black ... scowl. Do you recognize him?"

"That's papa, there's nobody like him in Walbrook," Ruth solemnly agreed.

"Ah ... ha ... ha! So I deduced!" ejaculated Moggs.

Higbie wished that he wouldn't make that noise. The fact was they were in a dire predicament. Precisely what the statutes of Maryland provided against old men who abetted girls in running away from parson fathers Higbie did not know, but the Roman code certainly would have dealt severely with them. "I think, Mrs. Potter, you'd better pull all the curtains," Higbie murmured.

In the dining-room dimmed by drawn shades with no other light than that which seeped in around them breakfast

114

was resumed. It was a spooky collation haunted by expectation of steps outside, of pounding on the door, of some avenging intrusion. "We seem to be," said Higbie finally breaking a long silence, "in a state of siege, so to speak."

Kendrick rattled his spoon angrily in his cup. "If he weren't your father, Ruth ... I'd suggest we chase him away."

"Don't mind the minister's daughter, boys," said Ruth. "Papa spanked me until I was old enough to kick his shins, and the big kleagle wouldn't be a bit averse to spanking Higbie right now; and if it should come to spanking papa I'd be glad to trim the sapling. Only it won't do any lasting good. You and Moggs can't stay here forever, and goodness knows I've got to make my escape; and the minute Higgles is all alone here..."

"Eja vero!" Higbie sighed. "I fancy I had better go to China, Kendrick, where they don't object to sleeping under rose-bushes. I won't be very welcome in Walbrook after this ... and what Martha is going to make of it when she comes home from Djabbir to take care of me is more than I can imagine."

"Poor Higgles!" Ruth patted his hand. "You with Martha and me with the Reverend. If we could only manage to trade all around!"

"But my dear Chaffinch! Surely the situation is not so hopeless as you believe! Your reputation here in Walbrook as a respected citizen of two generations will outweigh the maligning of this parson! Hm-m-m-mm?"

Ruth snorted. "You don't know papa, Moggsy. Papa

115

gets by with the uplift crowd ... and it doesn't take him miracles to do it either. Although he could change milk into vinegar, I swear. Just by preaching to it."

"Lordy ministers always get by, why we had a minister in Centreville got the whole choir in a family way and would the people believe it was him? Nary a one." Mrs. Potter's snort was older than Ruth's.

"And anyway the facts in the case rather favor papa. After all, Higbie did go to sleep under the rose-bush, and he doesn't go to church. And now

they'll catch me here, and then it'll be all over except the klan."

"The klan will not come around!" Higbie exploded. "I shall inform the police and demand protection."

"The cops won't help you." Kendrick's was the certainty of one privy to intrigue in high places. "Sheriff Brunch is a klansman himself, and out in the suburbs there are few cops that don't belong."

Ruth beat the table with a small but tense fist. "No, sir, Higgles! We've got to go somewhere else ... and I'm not going to leave you here alone. I got you into the mess and now I'm going to get you out of it. You can make up your mind you're going to travel, and that means tonight."

Brooding hush straddled the breakfast table. The last crumb of biscuit having been devoured, in spite of the anxiety of the company, and the cups all being empty quite, Mrs. Potter bestirred herself to remove the dishes. She returned from the kitchen with fingers on her lips. "The old man's out in back now," she averred. "I see

116

him sitting in the well-house gnawin his knuckles like the end of a ham-bone; Lordy don't he look wild!" ... "See?" Ruth glanced with an air of vindication at her companions. "Higbie and I have got to go!"

"And that means me too; good Lord, to think of me gettin this house all cleaned up an everythin jest for a couple a days! Well, we had a right good time while it lasted and I should worry, the klan hasn't caught me yet."

Higbie leaned desolately toward his charming atriensis, and "Mrs. Potter!" he exclaimed. "Of course I shall not leave my home in the face of these threats! And of course you will remain! It would be ... a calamity, Mrs. Potter!"

But across the basins and crags, the plains and plateaus of Moggs's face light was dawning as on the first day of creation. "Ah ... ha ... ha!" he erupted, conclusively nodding his head. "Kendrick, is the Mary Read ready to sail? Hm-m-m-m?"

IV

It was so incredible, so utterly preposterous, that Higbie listened to Moggs unfold the plan of the pirate cruise with jaw lead on his chest. But Ruth's ebullience was not long to be ignored, and Mrs. Potter's gasps and chuckles

beguiled him to wild fancies of derring-do; and ... it was escape. Moggs's recital ended in cheers, quite forgetful of Pudley's beleaguerment.

117

To Kendrick was entrusted the perilous mission of slipping at the first opportunity through the enemy's lines and making those necessary final arrangements which should complete the Mary Read's equipment ere another dawn for her expedition down the Chesapeake. Moggs scratched off a note which he was to deliver to Zambia; and then he was to have the trunks—he would know which ones—carted to Boston street. After that Kendrick was to purchase supplies for at least a week according to a list which Mrs. Potter and Ruth hastily put together. Finally Kendrick was to return up the Gwyn's Falls Drive with taxis and be ready in an appointed rendezvous at one o'clock, when the defenders of Castle Chaffinch would make a sortie.

Moggs would stay, to reinforce the garrison in the event of overt attack.

An interval of panting bustle succeeded upon the determination of these plans. Higbie, posted in the bathroom watch-tower, brought down news at shortly before two that the enemy had established himself on a sycamore bough, coat-tails dangling, from which with binoculars he was sweeping the premises. It was Kendrick's chance, for from that angle Pudley could not see the southern face of the house. Out of a dining-room window therefore he slipped, dodging from tree to tree down into the Marvellous Vale.

Sentinel duty was divided between Moggs and Higbie, but they spent most of the afternoon together sitting on the bathtub and hoping that Pudley would lose his balance.

118

Indeed vortexes of wrath did seize the minister now and then on his perch, it would appear, for he would brandish his glasses thunderously toward the house. These caused Moggs and Higbie no little amusement until at last, laughing so heartily, Higbie himself toppled over into the tub. After this the fun was rather spoiled.

By the glimmer of one feeble taper in the kitchen, where the window-shades were padded with several thicknesses of newspaper each lest the least trickle of light escape, dinner was consumed. Mrs. Potter outdid herself on the sweet candied bananas. "They won't keep all summer and

they're squushy to pack so I thought we might as well eat them all tonight," she explained.

And at ten o'clock, with five bags packed for flight and ready at the postern door, even the one candle was extinguished. Moggs in the rear and Higbie in the front hall the last watch was set, in case of a surprise attack, while Mrs. Potter went upstairs to a hot tub by moonlight.

But Ruth ... a strangely subdued and wistful Ruth, it seemed in the darkness ... came stealing into the front hall and sat down on the divan Higbie had moved out there, by his side. She sat quite close to him with a smilet and a sigh, and she lighted two cigarettes at the same time, cupping her hand about the betraying flicker of the match. "Here, Higgles dear, this is for you," she whispered putting one of them between his lips. "Do you like me, Higgles? Are you awfully mad at me?"

119

V

"O, Higgles, what do you think of me now?" Ruth whispered. "I told you I was a wicked girl. But you do love me just the same, don't you?"

... When she puffed at her cigarette that way you could see her face for a moment in the glow, you could see how tender her eyes could be. And when you tried to think what you thought about her, you knew that Ruth for all her mischief was no silly shallow giglot. But Daphne ... and not just Daphne: but lyric girl flowering into beautiful womanhood!

"Ruth ... if you knew how happy I am with you, you'd know what I think of you. I've missed something. Martha doesn't laugh as you do. She doesn't live as you do. And never, never since she was a little girl has she called me darling.... Not even in fun, really," Higbie added hastily, fearing he had been presumptuous.

"But I don't say it in fun, Higgles darling." Ruth took his hand and drew his arm around her. "And even in fun I never dare call papa darling, I never want to. But he never puts his arm around me. And what is a father for if it isn't sympathy now and then, and affection now and then, and more understanding than you can find in other people! Because Higgles, I'm not a wicked girl, either!"

Higbie puffed. "Moggs says fathers are useless and children even more so. There's more in Moggs than people will understand, such people as

Quoggses. They will go on ... breeding children, and trying to whip them and prod them and model them in their own images ... and when that doesn't succeed, turning them out of the house. How rarely they do succeed! And we prate of filial devotion and paternal love, and all either amounts to in the end is a ... is a five-and-ten-cent tear. Nugæ..."

"I don't think I ever want any children." Ruth pondered a moment. "But yes, I do want a baby, too. Why are the words so different? When you think baby you ... you sort of hunger all over to get one of your very own in your arms and hug it with all of you and kiss it all over. But when you think children you think of trouble and worry and how they go away from you as soon as they can, and never even write letters because they want to."

"Perhaps," said Higbie, quite surprised to find his thoughts tripping such capers, "we should think less of people and more of things? Things, said Zeno and Epicurus along with him, are fugitive; fire may destroy them, theft and poverty may deprive one of them; and they urged that in order to be happy we ignore them and find our treasure instead in friendships and philosophy. But friends may be destroyed, too. The word of a fanatic minister may turn them from us. And people may go away from us by themselves, on their own legs. Things can't do that. Things never scold us, never disapprove of us, give us whenever we please the best there is in them."

"Maybe," assented Ruth, "that's the point about babies."

When it's a baby it's a thing, and when it's a child it's a person.... Maybe ... that's the way with lovers?"

"It entices one, doesn't it? The new hedonism. A cup of coffee, for instance, has given me in a moment more pleasure than Mrs. Murchthaw in all the years when I counted her as my friend. There's no denying that."

"And one cigarette ... more comfort than the Reverend in the last ten years." Ruth laughed.

"And sunsets are lovelier than Pudleys and ... will never preach sermons!"

"And moons ... O, lovelier than anything!"

“Let’s make a new philosophy of things! Transcendental possessive-ism ... by Pudley, Moggs and Chaffinch!”

“But how about Amy?”

Higbie smiled. “She won’t need our reasoning.”

...“But how about Kendrick? ... Higgles!” said Ruth, “what do you think of Kendrick?” ...

To this question Higbie made no reply. Indeed his mind was already far from persons. It was puzzling upon a suspicion of wavering things out there in the moonlight. Now it fluttered again over by the hedge, the merest sigh of whiteness. And now ...the lamiae back again! ...“Look!” Higbie whispered.

Were there three tonight? Three! They were coming over the hedge two at a time ... six of them, eight of them, ten of them ... and then four more that tugged and strained at a burdensome object which Higbie could not distinguish. On they came, a ghoulis corteg across the lawn that made shivers tingle up Higbie’s

122

back, eerily they circled and mowed; and muffled voices were audible now and the crunching of heels on gravel, the snap of twigs.

Ruth’s hand tightened quivering on his. “Good God, they’re going to burn a cross!”

Yes, a cross. They were setting it up now, a clumsy gigantesque contrivance. In another minute the flames would leap from it and proclaim to all Baltimore the shame of Higbie Chaffinch. Was he to tolerate it? He had done nothing evil, and they would drive him away from his home! They had no right ...!

Rage spurted Higbie to his feet. “Wait!” cried Ruth, clutching his arm; but he shook free. The tiny flare of a match in that vampire circle of sheeted avengers kindled Higbie before it touched the kerosene-saturated rood. Wide he flung the door with a crash that reverberated through the house and over the garden, and with a whoop at the top of his lungs he hurtled, midget berserker with rage, to the attack.

Stiff with surprise the klansmen looked up from their moiling beneath the cross. Straight at them Higbie rushed, and now there were supporting whoops from behind him in Moggs’s robust basso, and a valiant skirling as Mrs. Potter waving a broom came after, and the shrilling of Ruth as rolling-pin in hand she hurried to the fray. Then Higbie with a gush of triumph saw

the enemy scatter. In all directions they fled like pins hit fair by the bowler, skirts held high from frantic pant-legs. Over bush and hedge they vaulted in panic rout. There was a big fellow heading for the lane and Higbie took after

123

him. The bellow of Moggs spurred him on and a confusion of thwacking and yelps indicated that the glorious Amy was achieving heroic deeds.

The big klansman ran lumberingly. Higbie inflamed by victory, unembarrassed by skirts, gained at every bound. He stretched out his hand and grasped his quarry by a streaming drapery. The fellow tripped and was down in the gravel, Higbie clinging with savage tenacity. There in the dust it might have been an unequal combat for the klansman was powerful, and one of his fists landed stunningly on Higbie's eye. But Moggs was to the rescue in a trice, and Ruth coming up with the rolling-pin terminated the scuffle.

Panting but elated the three defenders contemplated their captive, who drew himself slowly to a sitting posture, clapping his hand to his cranium. "My skull is fractured!" he groaned. "I am murdered! Help, help, police!"

"You just be quiet or I'll wallop you again!" commanded Ruth, waving her weapon. Then she seized the broken peak of the klansman's hood and ripped it off. A gaunt countenance smitten with ache and consternation blankly returned her stare.

"Listen, moon! It's papa!" said Ruth ... and the very night seemed more silver in her silvery ludification.

124

Chapter Eight

I

SWEET story it was! Kendrick, glancing over Dave Corson's shoulder as his city editor read, chuckled self-admiringly in spite of his fatigue. It was one story in a lifetime, it would get a headline eight columns wide on page one, and it was all true! That is to say proximately and morally true. There were a few digressions from the punctiliously veritable. But these were newspaperlike expedients to conceal the identity of its author and enable him later free from suspicion to write a better story.

The first edition had gone down, the second was not due for two hours. It was nine-thirty. By one o'clock he must be back in Gwyn's Falls Drive with taxies. But after a bustling afternoon, much hasting of cars and scattering of money, he had made the Mary Read ready for flight. There would be time yet for a couple of cocktails before he departed....

The simultaneous disappearance of three Baltimoreans prominent in social, religious and educational circles, was reported to the police this morning under circumstances which indicate the most baffling mystery in the history of American criminology.

The missing persons are:

125

Higbie Chaffinch, Ph.D., LL.D. (Hiram), professor of the Latin language and literature at the Johns Hopkins University, and one of the most eminent classicists in this country.

Hiltonshurley Moggs, scion of an old Maryland family, who has been in retirement from society for two decades as director of the strange philanthropy, The Moggs Foundation.

Miss Ruth Pudley, daughter of the Rev. Cyril Pudley, pastor of the Walbrook Methodist Episcopal Church and a student at Bryn Mawr where she was elected Queen of Beauty at the May Day revel.

Surrounding the disappearance of this queerly assorted trio of two sexagenarian men of retiring habits and the beautiful society girl are suspicions which leave the police puzzled between three theories: foul play; a triple suicide pact; or a sinister conspiracy the exact purport of which cannot be ascertained, but which is connected with appalling rites.

There are indications of another Ku Klux Klan outrage, as the Walbrook night-riders are alleged to have threatened to “get” Dr. Chaffinch if he did not quit that suburb. These threats are said to have been prompted after residents of the neighborhood, on their way to church one Sunday, came upon Dr. Chaffinch officiating in a ceremony of pagan or Rosicrucian nature. Dr. Chaffinch was crowned with flowers and clad, it is said, in sleazy draperies. This and other cryptic but suggestive rites are said to have been staged in the glades of Gwyn’s Falls and upon the Chaffinch estate.

Corson’s first banged on his desk. “Kenny!” he exclaimed, “We’ve got to have a feature on the Rosicrucians and their beliefs, and on the history _____”

“I can’t do it,” Kendrick interrupted. “I’ve got to hurry like hell, Dave. I’ve got to be at the meeting place in an hour. It’s a swell idea but anybody up here can write it.”

126

Kendrick replied with a steadfast gaze to Corson’s quizzical scrutiny. The city editor gave in. Fisk was around the office somewhere. “Fisk! O, Fisk!” After half a dozen appeals Fisk emerged from behind the telephone switchboard, bringing with him a strong aroma of moonshine, and grumbling took the assignment. “Jesus Christ, what a story!” Corson muttered, and turned back to his reading.

The three are known to have been much together the past month. Their meetings have been conducted with such nocturnal hugger-mugger and they have so shunned other acquaintances as to give rise to much gossip.

At the home of Dr. Chaffinch, on Ellicott Road early today, knocks on the door got no response. All windowshades were drawn and the house was evidently deserted.

Two months ago Dr. Chaffinch was bereaved of his wife, with whom he dwelt alone in the old ivy-covered house. Since then his behavior has set the placid suburb agog. Strange men and women have come and gone, and from the windows of this quondam most sedate of all Walbrook homes bright lights and hilarious laughter have startled the belated midnight pedestrian on Ellicott Road.

Not once has Dr. Chaffinch returned to his pew in the Walbrook Methodist Episcopal church which has been waiting pitifully empty for a knee bent in prayer since Mrs. Chaffinches death.

The last seen of the professor was when an officer of the Walbrook police found him lying on his front lawn asleep yesterday at mid-morning. This officer, Patrolman Huggins,

said, "I could get no intelligible explanation from the man, whom I believe to have been suffering from some at least temporary mental disorder, or confusion."

"My God, Kenny!" Corson jumped excitedly from his chair. "There's the sort of thing this fellow Moggs

127

has done! He gets a poor wretch into his power and then ruins him! He's destroyed old Chaffinch, he's destroyed the girl, he'll try to destroy you before you're through with him."

"I wouldn't wonder," Kendrick agreed, shaking his head anxiously. "Of course, we may be mistaken——"

"Not by a damn sight! He's a twentieth-century Faust, that's what he is. I tell you, the whole thing smacks to me of black magic."

"I've got those very words in the story, Dave. But hustle up and read. I've got to clear out in about fifteen minutes, you know."... Whiskey-sour. Lord, how good a couple of Eddie's whiskey-sours would taste! God send Eddie's on the job tonight. And ... better take along a bottle or two on the schooner....

At the home of Mr. Moggs, 210 South Gilmor street, a colored housekeeper answered inquiries. She insisted that she knew nothing of her master's whereabouts, except that he had sent a boy for three trunks which were already partially packed, with a note saying he would not return for some time. This note, Mrs. Zambesi avers, she used to kindle the stove.

The Moggs Foundation, to the affairs of which Mr. Moggs has devoted all his attention for the last two decades, is further described on stationery and cards as "for the purveying of useless things to worthy people." The extent of the activities or the purpose of this peculiar philanthropy is not known. Neighborhood rumors however have it that the basement of the Gilmor street house is equipped with alembic and retort like the chamber of an astrologer of the dark ages. From the haunted portals of the place issue at night the broken creeping figures of those who, strong and upright in their fearless young manhood, entered them by day.

128

And timorous grannies of the district whisper black magic and dread passing that door after dark.

Mr. Moggs...

Corson scowled. "Kenny, you ought to get the girl up nearer the lead."

... The girl! Ruth! It took Kendrick unawares, that remark; it sent him reeling. He jogged up his smitten spirit with an oath.... "I don't think so, Dave. There is suspense in that story. People'll know she's coming and they'll read on until they find her."... *Ruth!*...

"It isn't good style," Corson pondered, "but maybe you're right. And you're sure we can't get her picture? Don't you suppose George could get one out at old Pudley's house? George'll ... take a chance, you know."

"You can't get her picture, Dave. You've got Chaffinch and Moggs and Pudley anyhow for a layout; that's enough. And I've got to go. There's the story. Get it set up and if you don't hear anything further from me, shoot. The next one I'll mail, that'll be the pirate story. And ... Dave, I'll have to have an order. Better make it two hundred."

"Jesus Christ!" Corson slapped the manuscript viciously on his desk. "You've already spent that much. What're you going to do, marry the girl? Or endow the Moggs Foundation?"

"Umhmm," Kendrick muttered. The slip of paper that Corson grudgingly signed he thrust irritably into his pocket and he hurried out of the office without more than a nod to his superior.... *Ruth!*... But yellow money

129

is more smoothly seductive between the fingers than jade, and Eddie was providentially behind the bar to mingle the stuff of courage and repudiation; and ... it was a sweet story! Kendrick loitered with Eddie until midnight. Then he summoned two taxies.

II

THERE was not much moonlight under the trees along Gwyn's Falls Drive, however clear the lawns and meadows may have been above the woodsy ravine, as Selene thrust slowly out of a drift of clouds. Kendrick huddling beside a dusky driver whose uneasiness grew with the minutes was glad of his bottle. There were such crunchings and cracklings in the shadows at either side of the road, which curved here and over a rustic bridge spanned the brook; such mysterious gurglings and rustlings and murmurs. More than once peering into the gloom Kendrick thought he discerned the shimmer of

white that might be a klansman's habit.... And what could be keeping them so long? It was one o'clock already and——

An indubitable scuttling of feet. Kendrick waited breathless. Louder and nearer came the footfalls, and now one could hear the halsening of labored breath, and now ... a figure whipped past the silent car, a sheeted figure with skirts held well up from the twinkling pantlegs and peaked hood streaming on the wind behind. In a flash it was gone.

130

Kendrick started at a quavering moan from the darkling chauffeur. "Mmmmmmm mmmmmmm!" shuddered the boy. "Ise gwine go f-a-h fum hyah an long, yes sah! You spec dat was a klansmun? What he do ef he kotch me? What he gwine do wif me, hmmm?"

Kendrick seized the hand that was stealing toward the lights. It was a klansman, no doubt of that. Klansmen do not parade solo, ergo there must be more coming. Had a contingency untoward happened at the Chaffinch citadel? "Shh!" he whispered. "They'll kill you sure! Be still until they've all gone by!"...

Darkness again and the stir of water and wind and the clustering of shadows, and the panting of a scared darkey running like his car in flight on all four. What could have happened? To ... Ruth? If the klansmen actually had raided Chaffinch's place his story ...

A crash through the underbrush, a sudden covert conference of many voices, footsteps again and many of them now and ... a gleam of white in the moon again! More klansmen! The driver's terrified wail sirened pinched and shrill from small beginnings to almost a shriek. Then the shrouded drive and all that was in it pitched into blinding visibility as black Bob's fingers gave his keys a panic twist and the lights poured on. Pointblank the volley smote the onrushing cohort, and the history of the Moggs Foundation was like to have ended then and there; for the founder of that institution, who was well in the van, stopped running, paralyzed with surprise, and came the rest of the distance and halfway under the car on his waistcoat sliding. Close behind Moggs

131

was Ruth, rolling-pin in one hand and the end of a rope in the other. This rope was fastened about the neck of the Rev. Mr. Pudley, still in his nightie—it had been that that gleamed!—but with hood gone; and hampers were

strapped and tied upon front and back and both sides of him. In the rear of the minister bounded the valiant Mrs. Potter. And some distance farther, running rather blind and circlingly but with the clenched fists of indomitable resolve, was a battered gnome with one eye quite scarlet and swollen fast whom Kendrick had difficulty recognizing as Dr. Chaffinch.

One gulp to revive him and then it required no persuasion to induce Bob, into whose car Ruth and Mrs. Potter threw themselves, to step on it. Fast as he went out of this sheol he was never more than the width of three spare tires ahead of Charley his colleague, into whose chariot Higbie and Moggs had crammed the kleagle and themselves on top of him. Out of the glooms of Gwyn's Falls Drive the two cars hurtled, pointing toward the sea through streets which now at one-fifteen were deserted by the virtuous of Baltimore. But in front of an open-all-night counter restaurant on a bystreet finally Kendrick brought them up with injunctions to wait a minute: he had forgotten to buy cigarettes.

Inside at the telephone Kendrick grinned with professional enthusiasm. "Give me the city desk, Mr. Corson.... That you, Dave? Here's a change in that story. The Rev. Mr. Pudley, Ruth's father, is going along. Put him in with the vanished. And rush a man out to Walbrook. The klan raided Chaffinch tonight, there was a

132

wild battle.... Right? ... Right! and we're off in half an hour."...

Reek of the brackish water, reek of the decaying planks of the wharf, reek of an oyster cannery down the docks. A belated chime was tolling the last annunciation of two when the mainsail of the Mary Read strained up into the moonlight, blocks and tackle creaking as Ruth and Moggs and Kendrick tugged at the halyards. Now the moorings were off; now quivering as the gentle wind bellied out the canvas the schooner slid into the Patapsco.

Moggs had gone forward as watchman. Between decks the captive klansman bewailed his harsh fate; and Higbie was there submitting to the ministrations of Mrs. Potter, whose laughter, bright as the lamplight, floated out now and then from the companionway.

Here at the tiller alone with him was Ruth ... and Kendrick found it quite easy now to forget that he was Kendrick Glasby of the Chronicle and to remember only that Ruth was Mary Read.

III

BETWEEN decks, in the ample cabin which had once been the hold of the Mary Read and where lingered still in spite of repeated swabbings the aroma of historic molluscan cargoes, Higbie submitted to treatment at the hands of Mrs. Potter. He yielded his eye to her, still dazed. He yielded himself to the Fates, blinking about him at these incredible surroundings, too bemused for the present to marvel or care what might follow.

133

Those were berths over there against the wall, two berths on a side, curtained for privacy. From one of them even as he looked came the lugubrious drone of the parson. "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? how long shall mine enemy be exalted..." A berth for Pudley and a berth for Moggs, and one for Kendrick and one for him, Higbie. Ruth and Mrs. Potter were to share some other cabin, somewhere.

Stout beams crossed overhead, and from one of them hung an antique iron lantern which, poking feeble rays forward and aft, revealed most unpiratical bookcase and chairs, even to a phonograph.... Well, he didn't have to pinch himself, Higbie reflected. He had only to try to open that eye to convince himself he was not dreaming.... Which way was the boat going anyhow? Forward was aft and ... No; forward was forward and backward was aft.... All the same so far as he was concerned, and Walbrook. The important thing was that he was going. What would Minnie think?...

Out of what she persisted in calling the kitchen, in spite of all Kendrick's prompting, came Mrs. Potter. "Lordy what a shiner you have got!" she chuckled as she removed the cloth from Higbie's bruised optic and replaced it with a fresh one, tucking the cold wet folds around the injury. "What we ought to have acourse is some raw beef like I use to get for Herbie, that's my first, when he was in the quarry, right smart some of these here hunkies would pick a fight with him and a good skifflin he give them too but I never thought I would

134

of seen you Dr. Chaffinch with a shiner like this; and to think of you beatin up that preacher, and him twice as big as you are! Lordy Lordy if I don't die laughin!"

A little glow of triumph smouldered a moment in Higbie but dismaying presentiments quenched it soon. "Will this ... this shiner last very long?" he inquired. Drippies of chilly water ran down his cheek and chin and lost themselves there in the swathing of crash towel which growing moist was beginning to itch. What a sight he must be! "I'm afraid, Mrs. Potter, that we are embarked on a very unusual ... and perhaps perilous expedition. There will be a frightful scandal in Walbrook and I cannot but apprehend that ... that in some way you will be mentioned. I feel I owe you an apology, I do indeed, Mrs. Potter, for involving you in such an unpleasant predicament."

"Apology!" Mrs. Potter was highly diverted at the idea. "Why Dr. Chaffinch I don't see what you have to apologize for, leastways I wouldn't of come would I if I hadn't of wanted to, and so far as I can see we're jest havin a great old lark. Why, Willie'll take a fit when he hears about me goin piratin down the Chesapeake in a real boat, he always liked to play pirates when he was a little boy, and here's his ma is one! And you beatin up the preacher like that, what did I tell you about the Kew Klux Klan, it's only because they could hear an oyster bark that they disguise themselves in those nightshirts and hoods, don't you worry about them, Dr. Chaffinch."

..."Destroy Thou them, O God!" supplicated the ever more dolorous wail of the Rev. Mr. Pudley from behind

135

his curtain. "Let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against Thee. But let all those that put their trust..."

Mrs. Potter pausing a moment to listen tossed her head. "If I had of asked God to help me and He got me a broken skull I'd be likely sort of to wonder if I hadn't asked him a foolish question," she remarked.

"But ... I do feel remorseful and I hope he's not seriously hurt, Mrs. Potter," said Higbie ... feeling actually, he confessed to himself, the least bit gratified to hear such wails from his enemy. "I didn't want to get in a fight."

"Of course you didn't want to get in a fight, nobody wants to get in a fight, but when those klansmen came up with that cross you wouldn't be the man you are, Dr. Chaffinch, if you hadn't of took after them, and if they ever had of lighted it believe me there would of been a lot more to talk about in Walbrook than there is now."

“But think of me, at my age, a widower so recently, a quiet scholar and an officer of that great university ... think of me engaged in coarse brawling, think of me tangled up in this buccaneer melodrama!” Higbie shuddered. “It will set people aghast.”

Mrs. Potter was unpacking a hamper, parcels wrapped in paper, saucers and cups, and there a bottle. “Acourse they’d laugh if they found out about us; Lordy wouldn’t they jest laugh! and they wouldn’t jest laugh at you either because if you’re funny the parson is a whole lot funnier. But who’s goin to know about us? When we get

136

back, why, all you got to do is say you jest went for a little trip, there ain’t any law I know of that says a man can’t go away for a little trip now and then if he wants to, and he don’t have to tell the preacher about it either.”

Higbie inflected his open eye in the direction whence persisted the anguished monotone.... “O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God...” A spatter of acid stung him. There was the cause of it all, there was his tormenter, his persecutor indeed.... Behind the right ear Higbie mused is the throne of Nemesis. He scratched the appointed spot. “It wouldn’t be so bad, I dare say, if we hadn’t brought the minister along. How are we going to prevent him from telling all he knows and more besides, and...”—now for the first time the indubitable fact catapulted upon him— “...he’ll probably lay information against us for abduction.” Higbie’s voice minished to a horrified whisper. “We’ve kidnaped him!”

“Who,” Mrs. Potter spurted with a nod toward the lamenting psalmodist, “him? Lord a mercy Dr. Chaffinch you don’t think he is going to give us any more trouble, with a head like he’s got on him? Don’t you worry about him, we can tell things about him jest as good as he can tell about us, and there’s five of us to one of him, isn’t there?”

Higbie lifted his docile countenance to Mrs. Potter’s inspection. How ... gracious her fingers were on his brow and cheek! “You’re most consoling, Mrs. Potter,” he murmured.

She scrutinized him with a twinkle. “You sure look

137

like a desperate character now!” she laughed. “I guess that’s about enough cold water for a while, and as for me bein consolin, why, I’m havin the time

of my life, and if I was you I'd forget all about that rukus back home and enjoy ourselves sailin, it's jest a game you know, leastways I don't expect we'll cut very many people's throats, not to say anythin about Mr. Pudley; and what you need now is a little snack, I brought some sandwiches along and a little wine, then you'll be able to get to sleep and you'll probably sleep a lot better than you did last night on the grass, and I'll jest see if the rest of the crew wants sompnmhm now too, you help yourself."

She went to the companionway. Higbie found himself hungry indeed, actually faint! and here was a lavish spread of sandwiches with jelly in them, and peanut butter, and slices of succulent tender tongue, and breast of chicken. Higbie chose a specimen of the latter and took an eager bite in spite of the ache that every munch sent through the right side of his face. His good eye roved aimlessly across the table. But presently he perceived something that brought him to attention. He snatched up a scrap of paper in which sandwiches had been wrapped, a scrap now greasy and crumpled. It was part of page 233 of the manuscript, now for the past seven years toiled over so heartbreakingly with patience and diligence and infinite research and perpending, of his monograph on the ablative absolute.

Higbie ... stared. Behind all the contingencies of these tumbled and disheveled weeks, that at least had been sure, unalienable, waiting. One does not hang one's hat

138

in a monograph, there is no room for rubbers there coming in out of the rain. But this was the carapace into which, when the time of his return to Walbrook should arrive—to Walbrook; to Martha, to the accounting before the Murchthaws and the Quoggses, the Inchlings and the Updegroves—he could withdraw. He had known that and relied upon it all along, the knowledge had been the foundation of his confidence and courage, although only now had he become aware of it. And now the carapace was gone, it was only this tatter of smirched paper in his hand....

But worrying out his first bewilderment and searching his heart Higbie found in it neither profound grief at his loss nor indignation at the carelessness of the woman who had brought it about. Here was an omen and he considered it and the conviction grew upon him that even were the manuscript laid away in the deepest vault against his homecoming he would never add one word more to it....

Mrs. Potter was returning from the companionway. Higbie tossed the scrap under the table, with a sudden twitch in his throat as if a sigh awoke there and blinked and went again to sleep. Then Higbie smiled a little and poured himself a nipperkin.

IV

STRADDLE of the bowsprit of the Mary Read, beside the small curiosity-shop brass cannon which hinted at desperate quests, sat Moggs bare-headed and watched the dizzy

139

ripples suck under the blunt cutwater. It was not a heavy wind, the Patapsco plashed lullingly against the schooner's sides, and Moggs felt exaltation growing upon him.

Aft, beyond the white sails that curved so exquisitely in the breeze, was Kendrick at the wheel, Kendrick the laughing boy that the wry destinies beguiled at last into smiling had sent to be his companion. And aft beyond him, dropping away into the past, with the friendly miles nudging in between, was Baltimore. Off the starboard bow the shore unrolled slowly as the Mary Read lazed down toward the bay. Little lights in the darkness aligned in streets ... and who could believe crowds streamed without jostling, armies marched by wide files, through such tiny remote capillaries of traffic? Little lights bundled where factories and warehouses squatted down to the brink. And there was a great hoarding, an electric advertisement that surely must be visible from far across the Chesapeake, that orange-yellow glare! How it lagged away!...

Pirates! Visions of a tawny shore on a sea of deep flecked blue, of green palmettoes bending in the brisk wind, of the Mary Read careened in the sun; and there on the sand grouped around the treasure chest the buccaneers divided their booty. Visions of far sail and swift chase, shock of billows on lunging bows and scatter of drenching spray, pistol's challenge and dirk's retort, the pungency of gunpowder and the mad joy of battle!... Listen, moon! one's heart should hang! ... But one would be merciful to fair ladies, and string their throats with pirate pearls, and spread before them satins and silks,

140

ribbons and plumes and laces; and at the first port one would set them ashore in comfort and honor. For Clarissa's sake!...

How very slowly that flaming billboard dwindled into the past!...

Clarissa! ... But where are you tonight, my dear, my dear? Are you truly aloft there someplace behind the moon, behind that filminess of cloud-dust? Are you waiting for me? There shines the star Clarissa.... Do you understand why that is you? There are more splendid stars but none of them is constant as is this. And thus are you and thus am I ... quite a silly old man, my dear; you will be so amused! A little mad to be sure, but I have been a little mad since you were taken from me; it is a madness that tries to do no one any harm but only to be with you always, to while away the tedious years as best I can until the number of them is told and then, the white light and the glory in your hair!... Whittle off the chips, carve faces and smiles and idle fancies, until the branch is whittled away and the blade broken and one puts on one's hat and goes home.... Clarissa!...

"Yoo hoo!" came Mrs. Potter's comfortable summons from the companionway. "Yoo hoo! If any of you now pirates wants a snack with me and Dr. Chaffinch you better come on down!"

Moggs collected himself out of his reverie. Unusual, was it not, he reflected, getting to his feet, that that brash hoarding had not dropped farther behind? Moggs peered over the side ... and brought up with a jolt, for it appeared

141

at first that the Mary Read was sailing rapidly backwards! On further study however Moggs saw the explanation. It was only the sluggish flow of the Patapsco past them toward the bay. The electric billboard had indeed not moved an inch. The fact was the Mary Read had gone fast aground!

There seemed no immediate danger ... but Moggs ran aft, and, rounding the mainmast, perceived Ruth and Kendrick standing arm in arm at the wheel, laughing and chatting exuberantly.

"Ahoy!" said Kendrick. "What're you running for?"

"Why..." stammered Moggs, "I was wondering why we were going so slowly and——"

"It's the light wind, bully boy," explained Kendrick. "Wait till we get out of the river and we'll kick up our heels!" And he gave a slight expert twist to the wheel.

“I’m afraid,” ventured Moggs, “that it ... it really is the mud. And I’d say we might as well drop the anchor and join Mrs. Potter in the cabin; supper is ready, you know. Hm-m-m-m-m?”

Chapter Nine

I

BLUE-WASHED and flecked with gold was the late morning when Higbie donned his clothes, somewhat bewildered at first to find himself at sea, and emerged upon deck. Flood-tide and a fresh wind had restored control of the *Mary Read* to her rightful masters from the sandy spit into which she had prodded her broad nose. She was sweeping now at a speed of four full knots out into the green reaches of Chesapeake Bay with North Point sinking reluctantly off the starboard quarter. And something in his first lungful of the tonic breeze thrilled Higbie to the bottom of his three-score years and five, spite of an eye still shut and swollen. Bellying of sails, creak of tackle, shimmer and toss of water; liberty of twining dim horizons and land beyond sight or sound! But ... Higbie Chaffinch? Could it be Dr. Chaffinch, leaning into this wind upon this freeway?...

At the wheel were Ruth and Moggs, Ruth grasping the handles with slim sinewy hands and Moggs attentively instructing her. Forward was Kendrick with pad and pencil industriously scrivening. Him Higbie saluted.

"If it's a poem to Ruth," he chuckled, "Theocritus did one before you."

143

Kendrick was obviously impatient at the interruption. "It's a letter," he explained: "a very important one."

"Letter?" Higbie smiled. "Will you send it air-mail? Or entrust it to some skipper we have just plundered

Kendrick quite refused to raise his eyes from the scrawl, and Higbie turned aft. As he passed the companionway Mrs. Potter came struggling up with a tray heaped with breakfast. Now at last coffee cajoled Kendrick away from his writing. For greater comfort the *Mary Read* was hove to at anchor. A cover was spread on deck and all hands—excepting the Rev. Mr. Pudley who, still bemoaning a broken head, clung to his bunk and was served there by the compassionate Mrs. Potter—did buccaneer's best by the tenderly fried eggs and hot bread. When at last they were comfortably supplied with cigarette, pipe or cigar the first business of the morning was broached.

“We can’t very well go pirating in these clothes,” Kendrick explained. “When Moggsy and I decided to go roving in the Mary Read we cast about for more suitable costumes. Drink and the devil and the referee in bankruptcy helped us out. Come along, Moggsy, and give me a hand with the wardrobe.”

They disappeared together into the forecastle and staggered back in a minute beneath the weight of a huge chest bearing the aegis of the Domino Fancy Dress Shop. Ruth had it open with a shout before it was fairly off their shoulders and was scattering across the deck in a rhapsody of delight breeches and scarves, shirts and sashes, crimson bandannas and black satin jackets and boots with

144

big shining buckles: a Porto Bello haberdashery of garments. Mrs. Potter was not slow to join her, and Moggs himself with many a triple guffaw of deprecation thrust an occasional clutching hand into the chest.

Higbie quailed with embarrassment and shuffled frantically through every possible excuse for not exchanging his own modest habiliments for these burlesque duds. His companions however would listen to nothing. They laughed down his protests, they made up a threefold selection from the small-pirate sizes without so much as asking his opinion, and they put the bundle into his arms and ordered him between decks. Quite red behind the ears he slipped into the cabin. Behind the curtain of his bunk he sat for some time adjusting temper and courage to the necessary degree. Then at last he pulled off his pants and drew on the scarlet hose, black breeches and white shirt that came first to hand. Even with these the torment was not complete, for when he stepped out of his berth Ruth was waiting and pounced upon him and wound up his middle with a bright green sash and knotted a fiery kerchief over his straggling gray locks. With this she was eminently pleased, she laughed and clapped her hands, and up on deck she flew to herald his coming.

Now for a minute Higbie found himself alone. Heu me! Forward there hung a mirror, and he slunk to it and made bold to look.

The first glimpse of what was in the mirror startled Higbie out of breath quite, for it was a horrible apparition. It was an evil fleering countenance, it was a Providence Island nightmare countenance, it would have served

145

much better than those illustrations in the book to express the crafty ferocity of Long John Silver, the menace of Israel Hands. It was a very hagseed countenance with those stringy moustaches and goatee, with those pinched cheeks, with that seamed brow crowned barbarically by the bandanna, from beneath which a few ashen curls protruded; and especially with that ghastly eye, bulging, empurpled, obscene! ... That was not Higbie Chaffinch!

Higbie looked again. But on further inspection and after he had tried one or two grisly frowns and murderous grimaces, Higbie found himself fascinated by that vision of piratical hideousness. He experimented. His grin, he discovered, was as scurrilous a leer as any wench could desire, and when he registered insolent defiance his effigy made himself shrink. He was enjoying himself hugely at the mirror when at last imperative voices came booming down the companionway and demanded his presence in council.

... But what, eheu, would Minnie think? ... Higbie jerked his kerchief to a more rakish angle, gave a brisk twist to the drooping moustaches, and went chuckling to the ladder. Minnie would certainly be surprised. "That," Minnie would think, "can't be my Higbie!"

II

"*WE* must now, bully boys," said Kendrick—strutting himself in a wild striped shirt and buskins, with a wicked knife hung at his belt—"elect our officers. We've got to have a captain and a master, a quartermaster and a boatswain.

146

I guess one of us'll have to be just the crew and if you don't mind I'll be that one; because there's only two of us know how to navigate, and between Moggsy and me he ought to be the master."

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" ejaculated Moggs—who flaunted cocked hat and scarlet cape flowing from his shoulders, and thrust his thumbs into his sash with a haughty gesture Higbie resolved to practise himself; and he was almost too voluble in his protestations in Kendrick's favor until the acclaim of the pirate band overwhelmed him.

"Ray for Pansy Moggs!" shrilled Ruth. "The daringest son of a rum puncheon that ever navigated the Spanish Main, devil damn me if he isn't!"

Higbie glanced curiously at Ruth, suspecting that even she had doubtless read *Treasure Island*, and hoping Moggs would not recall his own delinquency in that regard and tell the rest about it as a joke. The proceedings were interrupted for a moment while Ruth and Kendrick argued whether “son of a rum puncheon” was a proper or merely a rhetorical buccaneer oath, and, if proper, whether it was complimentary. Ruth brought the bicker to a brisk end however by striking her rusty cutlass into the deck with an elan that gave Higbie momentary chills, and declaring that whatever it meant she said it.

Presidency of the council being thrust upon Pansy as the only existing officer, he took the deck with what seemed to Higbie a rather conceited swagger.

“I believe,” said Moggs, “the next officer to be elected is captain, and if I am not mistaken the captain is our leader in all military enterprises, raids, boardings and

147

such. Hm-m-m-m? He decides where we shall go, what ships we shall pursue and what flee, how——”

Once again with a gusto that made Higbie wince Ruth stabbed her ancient weapon into the planks. “Why, by God, go another word more, Master Pansy? There’s no choice, men! There’s not a one of us here would step ashore with Bloodeye Chaffinch, pistols or swords, and ever come back again from the gory sands! It was Bloodeye alone and single-handed put a score of our enemies to rout! It was Bloodeye downed their leader, aye, and was like to have throttled him if Pansy hadn’t saved his life! It’s Bloodeye Chaffinch ought to be our captain, and I love him like a brother, devil damn me if I don’t!”

The thunder of applause that went rocking now over the sleepy Chesapeake would have put a grin on the twisted deadman’s-lips of Blackbeard himself, and a sigh in the throat of bold George Lowther that never again will singe his whiskers in musket fire.

As for the rest of the election proceedings, over which Higbie found himself henceforth presiding, he could not tell you an oath or an attitude, so continuously amazed was he. No more can I tell ... except that Higbie found it not too difficult, in that costume and with that company, to gruff a Goddam as villainous as another’s on occasion; and that Devildamn Pudley was declared boatswain of the company amid the wildest jubilation; and

Flash Potter, bubbling with glee, its quartermaster. And that in the end with a piling and pealing of cheers they swung to the topmast into the sun an oriflamme black

148

as vengeance, with cross-bones and skull of chalky white and a dripping red heart pierced by a dirk: the Jolly Roger!

III

It was afternoon before Captain Bloodeye and his crew turned to the first important business confronting them as an organized band, id est, what to do with the prisoner. The dispute waxed and waned for nearly an hour before an agreement was reached, and then further argument was required to induce Mrs. Potter to play her role of advocate. The prospect of it made her confused and gigglesome and she expostulated merrily that she would be quite unable to keep her face straight. It was pointed out however that she already must have won deep into the stricken preacher's confidence by her cold cloths for his head and her morning and noonday trays to his berth. It was pointed out that he would rely much on her womanliness and kindness. And in the end, with a final catharsis of laughter as if to empty her throat before undertaking the mission, she consented. Three times before she reached the companionway she halted perforce to conquer renewed mirth. Then down into the cabin she vanished.

Now, this was the first time since the Mary Read slipped from her moorings that the Rev. Mr. Pudley ventured to extrude his head from behind his curtain. To be sure he had overheard some things between psalms as he lay in his berth. To be sure he had caught a glimpse

149

of breeches and kerchief when Flash Potter thrust in his luncheon to him, but he had discredited this as an hallucination born of his suffering and had only prayed the more fervently. So his consternation when he came up on deck and saw his captors one and all transmogrified into so rascally a band of buccaneers, and when they greeted him with rousing cheers of bully-boy Brimstone, may easily be imagined. He collapsed wanly into a chair.

"Heaven help me, what do I see!" he gasped. "Is that you, Dr. Chaffinch? Ruth, is that you, in such immodest masquerade? Dr. Chaffinch,

a man of your years, so recently a widower!”

“Wope!” exclaimed Ruth sharply as she struck the old cutlass quivering into the deck between Pudley’s large feet. “Shut up, dearie, you don’t know the half of it yet!” Then arms akimbo she wheeled upon the pirate company. “Gentlemen, this is Brimstone! and I nominate him for membership in the band because he’s the roughest, crookedest, most murderous butcher in all the Methodist ministry! He used to be a klansman and go galloping around the country in his nightgown, and what did he do that for, gentlemen? Why, just for the sheer joy of beating up girls and boys, old women and men! just for the sheer joy of hearing them howl! He’s the dourest, most sanctimonious, most poison-hearted——”

“Silence!” raged the affrighted Pudley leaping to his feet and shaking an apocalyptic fist at his daughter. “It is a pack of lies!”

But Flash was already tugging at his arm and admonishing him in earnest whispers, and Ruth faced about

150

at his outburst with a gaze of utmost surprise. “What!” she cried. “You there, Brimstone, do you mean to deny you used to be a klansman and go out whipping little boys and old women? Do you mean to deny that, when Bloodeye Chaffinch knows the truth as well as I do? Bloodeye, was Brimstone a klansman?”

Higbie nodded emphatic corroboration. “I’m afraid he used to go hopping over hedges and scuttling across people’s lawns in the moonlight. He tore his shirt-tail once on my very hedge.”

“Merciful heaven!” muttered Pudley sinking back into his chair and covering his face with his hands, while the applause of the pirates went past him like brisk wind.

“And what is more,” declared Higbie gulping down embarrassment and glee together as he strode forward to speak his piece, “he’s one of the hardest-drinking whiskeyfiends in all Maryland. Gentlemen, I was walking past the parsonage one bright sunny morning when I looked and there, infandum! beneath a rose-bush in a drunken stupor I perceived this Brimstone himself!”

“You are mad, Dr. Chaffinch!” chuntered the unhappy Mr. Pudley. “I shall have you——” But his mouth clapped to despairingly as Mrs. Potter hastened to whisper him counsel.

“Why, that gin-bibbing old rumdum!” Ruth favored her drooping progenitor with a rousing clump on the shoulder. “Why papa, you crook, you! Did you really do that?”

Baleful indeed was the glance that now the Rev. Mr. Pudley lay heavily upon his rebellious child; baleful, but

151

with the ashen brow of hopelessness. Once or twice he licked his fevered lips with a parched tongue ... and from Ruth his gaze swung to Higbie, and from Higbie to Moggs.

“Hm-m-m-m?” said Pansy. “Did you really do that?”

Mr. Pudley nodded dismally in assent as once more the ovation of the buccaneers smote him, the volley of the firing squad.

“Ah ... ha ... ha!” mused Moggs, beaming. “You gay old seducer, Mr. Pudley! I wonder if you remember as far back as twenty years, one night, one night of revelry and abandon, when you and a young woman— was she the dark-haired one, Pudley, or that yellow-haired girl you were so fond of?—were ejected from the hotel? Hm-m-m-m-m?”

Horried now beyond the power of speech the parson stared upon his tormenter, deaf even to the injunctions which Flash Potter, herself almost dumb with pent laughter, poured into his capacious ear.

Moggs smiled still more broadly. “You rascal! And I can’t quite remember her name; was it Tillie ... Tillie something? Hm-m-m-m-m?”

With a groan that stirred sudden qualms in Higbie Pudley flung himself sprawling at the feet of his child. “Ruth, Ruth, believe them not!” he girmed. “God help us, they are deceiving you, my poor daughter, they are luring you to slavery and perdition by such blasphemous falsehood!”

Ruth winked. Then she put a sturdy hand under the cantilever frame of Pudley and helped him to a sitting

152

posture. “Brimstone, don’t say a word! We’re proud of you, Brimstone, devil damn me if we aren’t! Am I right, gentlemen? Here’s the pastor of the Walbrook church confesses himself cutthroat, drunkard and sweet daddy. Is he worthy of membership in our band? Or shall we ease him overboard for the fishes? There’ll be more rum for us, remember, without a belly big as his to beg a share!”

The acclamation of the pirates fairly whistled in the shrouds of the Mary Read. As one far gone in bhang, and prodded still by the promptings of Mrs. Potter, now irrevocably hilarious, the Rev. Mr. Pudley listened in silence, without a gasp of denial, to the cheers that welcomed him to damnation. With gag and shudder the Rev. Mr. Pudley downed his dram as the toast went around to the new-formed brotherhood. And tottering with the tread of a sleepwalker he went meekly between decks bearing the bundle of buccaneer clothing selected for him by his fellows.

And so that night there were six hardy villains sat down to partake of one of Mrs. Potter's most inspired dinners. But had the devil been watching he would have perceived that the largest of them all seemed strangely dejected and ate but half a helping.

IV

LATE that night strolling the deck alone, Higbie overheard from below the taffrail, whither as darkness fell Ruth and Kendrick had repaired exclusively to the skiff

153

that trailed behind the Mary Read, two eloquent sentences.

...“But I never had the least hope old Higbie Chaffinch would put on a costume!” came Kendrick's laughter.

“Belay there, idiot child!” came Ruth's reply. “It wasn't Professor Chaffinch that dressed up; it was Bloodeye Chaffinch, Higgles for short, the youngest pirate aboard!... And I wish there was half as much song in you as there is in his silly sweet head! I'd let you——”

Higbie crept hastily out of earshot ... singing. Indeed, he knew it now, he could never be mistaken again, he was not Dr. Higbie Chaffinch! He was no longer Minnie's Higbie. But ... Bloodeye Chaffinch, Higgles for short, the youngest pirate aboard.

154

Interlude: By the Yellow Chaptonk

Robert Willoughby Snyghe MacVickar Weems was forty-seven years old and lived alone in three rooms and a sunny porch in the south-eastern wing of Chaptonk House. Of this the north-western wing and the centre,

together with the rear wing where formerly the servants were housed, were long since locked up and silent and never quite warm nowadays even in July. Judge Weems's life was as his ancestral mansion, four-fifths untenanted and locked up. He had never married. His material wants were cared for now as well as might be by Aunt Sally, his housekeeper and chief creditor, a capable and devoted slave of four-score years at least, except when attendance at some revival left her temporarily prey to that uncompromising spiritual exaltation referred to colloquially as the high-haids.

Judge Weems was as every Maryland gentleman should be vitally interested in the political hue. He resented the occasional encroachments of Republicanism, captained by carpet-bagger guano magnates and niggers smelling no less objectionably. He also resented the laxity, the stupidity, the cowardice and the corruption of the Democratic chieftains whom he held responsible for these encroachments, as who should leave the treasure-chest

155

open and unguarded in a city enfranchised to thugs.

These developments Judge Weems followed passionately every morning in the Chronicle, which he read at breakfast on the sunny porch, looking out over a lawn that sloped down to the reedy brink of the Chaptonk. His burning conclusions he would declare to the broad dispassionate tide, and well it was for the river that it never argued back!

Every morning after his meditations on the political situation and his harangue to the Chaptonk, Judge Weems would turn to the editorial page of the Chronicle and there peruse from top to bottom the column conducted by The Timonium Bard. On occasion Judge Weems himself was a contributor to it with a stanza on some political subject, or perhaps a more earnest exhortation in the prose of an open letter. To the vulgar columns captioned Vox Populi Judge Weems never condescended to address himself. And once, when an epistle sent to the Bard in person slipped into that plebeian section, he excoriated the editorial bard of the Chronicle in thundering terms and threatened actually to secede from the Union of its subscribers.

Very recently a third department of the paper had come to his attention. When first he glimpsed the mosaic with its numbered vacant squares he passed it by with curling lip: memories of lotto and acrostic. It was borne in upon him gradually however that the entire nation was in the grip of a

cross-word-puzzle mania. Could it be possible! One morning with a contemptuous laugh he put his first pencil-mark on the mosaic. It was quite

156

as he expected—simple to the point of childishness, dull, utterly unpuzzling. He guffawed with derision at the thought of the simpletons who found the thing baffling enough to intrigue them. The next morning, the same result. What sorry testimonial to the intellect and ambition of the nation, that it devoted daily the first of its morning freshness to such nonsense! Day after day as he solved the puzzles his contempt for the great American public increased. Better depravity than this! Better the grandiose perversions of imperial Rome, which did indeed produce a Juvenal and a Persius, than the cross-word puzzle! That produced ... Henry Ford and Coolidge, Bryan and the realtor!

Once, to demonstrate how easy it was, Judge Weems began the composition of an original puzzle to be entitled “Yankee-doodledom.” After three or four days’ work however he crumpled the ridiculous sheet into a wad and tossed it into the Chaptonk. What rot!

On the morning in question Judge Weems did not get even so far as politics in the Chronicle. A portentous black headline clear across page one shook his statesmanlike absorption in national issues with seismic profundity. It declared in accents of passion not heard from the decorous Chronicle since the first volley at Sumter the following fact:

MYSTERY SWALLOWS 4 EMINENT MARYLANDERS

Filling two columns on the right hand side of the page were the pyramiding minor heads that supplied the shocking details:

157

**ROSICRUCIAN LOVE CULT,
KLAN VENGEANCE, HINTED
IN WALBROOK SENSATION**

**Dr. Chaffinch, Widowed Hopkins Professor,
Disappears with Mad Philanthropist,
Beautiful Society Girl and
Well-Known Evangelist**

**Evidences of Desperate Midnight Struggle
Suggest Tragic Conclusion to Weird
Pagan Moon-Worship Rites on
Lonely Chaffinch Estate**

... Dr. Chaffinch! No, incredible! Not the mild little Dr. Higbie Chaffinch before whose platform he himself, Robert Weems, had explored the austerities of Cicero and the beauties of Horace! Weems read more and more gaspingly on, and it became apparent even to his reluctant wit that this Chaffinch and no other was intended. And so the old boy's mind had been shaken at last by his bereavement! and he had thrown over everything, with a girl and a lunatic and a parson, and gone away into oblivion!

He was a good little gentleman, too, Weems remembered from long ago: tolerant, sympathetic, gentle. The boys were always up to some practical joke on him, nothing rough but sufficient excuse for boisterous laughter in the classroom. And he took their pranking with a slow patient smile, rather enigmatic, rather as if ... well, as if he were laughing too at himself, but more than that at the boys, and not only at the boys but at all life. Good little gentleman ...

158

Out of his reverie Judge Weems roused when a gleaming flivver drew up at his gate. Judge Weems did not affect automobiles, for reasons well known to himself and to Aunt Sally but never mentioned between them. There was not a car in the neighborhood and rarely indeed did rubber tire stir the dust of its highways. It was only on occasions of one specific intent that a flivver had stopped at his gate during the last ten years. This one was new, a shining polished vulgarly new machine. But its owner was the same.

Judge Weems arose, with a smile to conceal his sinking at heart, and greeted Phil Linthicum, from the Crisfield bank.

For fully an hour they discussed the political situation, and it was some consolation to Judge Weems that his visitor was readily converted to full and even vehement concurrence with the Weemsian views, before business was broached. This time Jelly roll Hobbs was in trouble, had defaulted in his mortgage payments, and the bank ... unless Judge Weems, having an interest of course in the old paternal estate, paid up the darkey's arrears ... would be compelled to foreclose.

Judge Weems was a gentlemanly geyser of excoriations of the nigger, who, it seems, squandered his penny-pile earnings in cawn likkah. He would see Jelly roll and take the black hide off him if he failed to pay up in full and at once. In that event of course he, Weems, would assume himself the mortgage; he would do it this very minute were he not ... a few extraordinarily promising investments! ... in some embarrassment financially. But there was an asset he would liquidate if necessary,

159

to keep the old fields out of the hands of strangers.

Mr. Linthicum was smilingly content at these protestations. No doubt Judge Weems would see that the matter was tended to one way or another within the week; it was unnecessary to hurry; and an unpleasant business anyway, but a bank must be careful....

The flivver lurched away, flashing back the sun through the tower of yellow dust that swirled above it. Judge Weems drew long on his pipe, watching it, and when at last it dropped from sight behind a clump of cottonwoods his gaze lingered on that point. For all these lands had once been his, had been at least the Weems estate; all these sweet rich fields on either side of the torpid Chaptonk. Parcel by parcel they had gone until at last there remained actually his property only the ruinous old manor house and the lawn to the river-brink. They belonged by half-acres to the darkies whose fathers themselves had been part of the Weems estate.

That in itself was not so bad. The darkies knew their master still; Jellyroll did, doffing his tattered felt and stepping out of the road as the Judge approached; and Aunt Sally did, deferring to him adoringly as "Massa Bob." But niggers were shiftless folk. They borrowed money on their garden patches and defaulted on their payments, and out of their hands the fields were slipping. That was the terror Judge Weems dreaded. A

butcher owned four acres of land that was his, Judge Weems's. A suspicious white family from Connecticut ... not man or child of which Judge Weems could ever bring himself to recognize ... had come incredibly into pos-

160

session of twelve acres more. Now Jellyroll's corner was going....

Investments? Judge Weems drummed nervously with his fingers on a yellow envelope that had come from Baltimore in the morning's mail; his subscription to the Chronicle was overdue. And that one miraculous asset? It was a flimsy barricade behind which to defend his fields from the invader. It was a picture on a square of parchment.

161

Chapter Ten

I

“O FTEN I wonder.” remarked Moggs as he and Ruth and Higbie sauntered aft in the tranquil morning sun, “whether we are quite right to boast that the automobile opens up to the city-dweller stifled by soot and sweltering on the ovenlike pavements the coolness of the woods and the peace of dingle and hamlet? Should we not rather deplore that the automobile brings to the countryside and quiet village the bustle and corruption of the city? Hm-m-m-m-m? What, for instance, would become of this idyllic place, dreaming here beneath its elms and cottonwoods, if motorists found it out?”

Toward the odd dozen cottages of Tulls Corner, clustering down to the reedy banks of the Chaptonk, in whose wide estuary the Mary Read rode at anchor, Moggs gesticulated. They had arrived the evening before in this placid water, planning to get provisions and to give Kendrick an opportunity to mail the letter he had been days now composing, and which he declared was so important. And this was their first glimpse of the town, which included a general store and post-office, a blacksmith shop, and a brace of churches along the one broad

162

dirt avenue. Gradually up from the marshy bottoms sloped the land, rich loam fields that over beyond the trees became tomato and corn patch, melon and lettuce. There was a wharf of white weathered timbers at the foot of the lane, and on the end of it drowsed a boy in straw hat and overalls with a fish-pole.

Breakfast on the Mary Read was over. From the galley came a rattle of dishes as Mrs. Potter and the minister industriously made things ready for the trip ashore. Kendrick, in the cabin, was still plunged deep in his epistolary preoccupation. And Higbie, sucking on his pipe, listened absently to Moggs’s gentle philosophizing and felt himself absorb with every pore the peace of this time and place.

“Regard,” continued Moggs, “that happy laddie with his hook and line! What a pity, if the automobile should come roaring and screeching and

reeking into his beatitude!”

“What you ought to say, Moggsy,” contended Ruth, “is that the automobile gives the poor farmer a chance to get into the city, where he can forget his barnyard and hayfield and go to a movie and have some fun. And I’ll bet you that that barefoot boy’ll turn into an automobile mechanic and that all he’s dreaming about now is how he can get away from this place and go to the city and that all he has in his heart for us is envy and jealousy and nastiness and——”

“What, edepol, is he doing now?” interrupted Higbie. It was to be sure a strange gesture the happy fisher-boy made. For he leaped to his feet and swept the

163

schooner with popping eyes and was off up the dock headlong, his fish-pole quite forgotten.

Moggs chuckled. “I suppose it’s the excitement of an unfamiliar boat in the river. Ah ... ha ... ha! I daresay we shall be quite a sensation!”

“Listen, moon!” Ruth ejaculated. “What it is, is our costumes! He’s just scared out of his wits, that’s what he is! I suppose the whole village’ll go scuttling away across the fields in a panic!”

“To be sure! and I had forgotten all about them, and the Jolly Roger at our masthead!” Moggs was overcome with mirth. “You know, all these villages around the Chesapeake are full of pirate legends, and these poor people will think here’s Captain Kidd come back to plunder them! Ah ... ha ... ha.!”

“Don’t laugh, Pansy!” Ruth protested. “Look your wickedest and I’ll go and get Kendrick and Amy. Let’s give Tulls Corner a real scare!”

She hurried away to bring the rest of the buccaneers up on deck. Moggs pulled his grin together, and turned to watch developments in the village; and Higbie felt imps of mischief capering in him too as he perceived the first indications of excitement come peering and gesticulating out of the general store, into which the scuttling fisher-boy had hurtled. They were two men with white aprons knotted around their waists, and they stared out shading their eyes with their palms across the rippling Chaptonk to the Mary Read, and seemed to engage in animated dispute. One of them then made haste

164

up the street, only to return in three minutes with three other men and one old woman, all in great agitation. By now the original fisher-boy had collected a small constituency of his own, including seven children between four and fifteen years of age, five of them black and one uncertain, and two dogs.

Tittering in spite of Ruth's pinches and injunctions Mrs. Potter had joined the pirates aft, and Kendrick even had allowed himself to be seduced away from pencil and paper and now was an enthusiastic spectator of the consternation that was wracking Tulls Corner to its quietest kitchen and shed.

From the fire-engine barn issued at length a lean figure in boots, shirt-sleeves and broad straw hat, upon whose vest gleamed a very Venus of police badges. He was engulfed for a moment by the swarming villagers, but presently he elbowed his way past them and marched toward the dock, followed by the entire throng.

"Maybe we'd better whoop a little," whispered Devildamn; and before Higbie could advise more discretion out came her rusty dirk, to be brandished with buccaneer bravado in the sun.

This gesture, calculated to stampede the timorous peasantry in terror, somehow failed of its purpose, Higbie reflected. Indeed, a slouching vagabond with a dribble of tobacco on his chin actually had the effrontery to reply to Devildamn's threat by doffing his hat in a most egregious bow. The villagers, Higbie suspected ... and a tinge of red surged into his cheeks at the thought ...

165

were not at all frightened. They were excited obviously, but they came streaming down the wharf without shudder or moan.

"It ... it didn't work very well," murmured Higbie to his truculent boatswain. And Ruth herself looked on with something akin to stupefaction as the yokels of Tulls Corner, gathering at the very end of the dock, grinned and yo-hoed.

"O Willie! Heigh-o, Willie!" clamored the fisher-boy to a belated but scurrying crony. "Come awn quick! Lookat de movie show!"

The second clerk could be seen to remove a cigarette from his mouth preliminary to speech. "Look at the gay old goat with the shiner!" he remarked, addressing the whole village. "Ain't he the gay old goat, though! That girl there, maybe she's his dorter."

“Aw, fer cripe sake!” corrected a scornful youth with a pencil over his ear. “That ain’t his dorter, I s’pose you think actors goes bouncing aroun with their dorters, that’s his wife mos likely. They likes em tender.”

... Upon the blank silence that had settled over the decks of the Mary Read burst hollowly Moggs’s effort at laughter. “I presume we simply appalled them, poor good souls. Hm-m-m-m-m?”

Captain Bloodeye Chaffinch ... his injured eye at this moment looking pale and ashen in the richer crimson of his entire countenance... was already on his way to the companion, whither Kendrick suddenly mindful of his interrupted epistle, had preceded him.

166

II

IN the cabin the pirate council came to order, irascible and acerb.

“If we must go ashore,” suggested Captain Bloodeye, “I presume it would be best to ... to put on our regular clothes. I wouldn’t like them to laugh at us, you know; and one can hardly expect, in such ignorant unimaginative people, appreciation of our ... our little joke.”

“Ah ... ha ... ha! How ridiculous a provincial, rustic people can make itself!” Moggs’s cachinnation was, it seemed to Higbie, patently forced and artificial. “One often finds too, in small villages like this which have been without the stimulation of outside interests, which have suffered through decades of inbreeding and stultification, a pinched and malicious spirit toward all strangers. It might be wiser for us to ... ah ... go somewhere else. I’m sure we are not in such immediate want of supplies. Hm-m-m-m-m?”

“What about your happy laddie now!” jibed Ruth, fuming restlessly up and down the cabin. “I’ll tell you men what I think about it. I think we ought to show those blithering asses something really worth laughing at. I move we all go ashore tonight and raid them, that’s what I propose!”...

All afternoon and evening, plans for the raid were debated. It was agreed that Mrs. Potter, being not quite so fast on her heels as her comrades, should remain on the Mary Read. She insisted that she would not be at all afraid, and as for the minister she anticipated no trouble

167

from him at all. But as a final precaution Brimstone was summoned before the council and given his choice between gyves—and a fine clanking set of antique irons was dangled before his eyes—or a promise not to try to escape. Pudley promised.

When it was but an hour until midnight, the village now lying in impenetrable shadow without a light at any window or tread in the street, the pirates got into the skiff. From the taffrail Mrs. Potter whispered them a chuckling farewell and quick return. And off upon the dark tide they slipped.

III

In the shallows along the low shore the skiff gently grounded. There was water still ahead, Moggs reported from the bow; but Higbie, mastering a creepy apprehension of snakes, was the first man overboard, splashing ankle-deep in the water. “Follow me!” he commanded in a hoarse whisper. The muck sucked at his heels, the reeds twined clammily around his feet, but a mighty erethism tingled through Higbie from nape to toe as he struggled to shore. And on the bank they at last assembled, and began the stealthy advance through the darkness, groping through willows and brush, toward the gardens they had decided upon from the Mary Read during the afternoon: gardens teeming with luscious things, with berries in profusion and melons yellow and green nestling in their vines and tomato plants in neat rows, laden down with the red ripe fruit. And now they were

168

there, boots sinking deep in the soft loam. And now ... Higbie was alone. They had scattered each with his basket to the patches already assigned. The night closed behind his pirate companions, their steps could be heard a moment and then silence blotted them out.

Higbie was alone....

Tomatoes were Higbie’s task, and he bustled with tremulous hands into it, his heart thumping. Now and then he paused and stood erect to listen. Vague and alarming murmurs and stirrings filled the gloom ... but nothing came of them, and he bent back to his toil. By touch he picked, the darkness filling his eyes, and the plants proved not half so thickly fruited as they had seemed from the schooner. Up one row he went with his basket, down another row, back again.

“Che-e-e-p!”... Drifting faintly from far to the right the buccaneers’ signal startled him into wareness. Higbie moistened his parched lips and tried to respond, but something stuck in his throat and it was only on the fourth attempt that, feeble and wavering, he sent an answering “che-e-e-p” back to his band. It was the signal for guidance, not the triple staccato “cheep cheep cheep” of warning.... Higbie stood stark still, all of him one ear with listening. But the silence was broken by no second cry. Empty was the deep night, in which the stars shone tiny and pale and remote. Higbie stooped panting once more to the plants....

But what was that? Higbie froze rigid staring at an enormous bulking shadow that blocked his path, as if some menacing jinn, some monster of darkness reared

169

suddenly there to fling itself upon him. Two minutes he waited, bracing himself desperately against the impending annihilation. But the bulk did not move ... and presently a pungent odor seeped to his nostrils, and from that ominous shadow came unmistakably the squawk of a sleepy hen. A chicken-coop ...

“Che-e-e-p”...

Now incredibly beguiling memories began to rise in Higbie, memories of that ambrosial banquet that enchanted moonlit night at Walbrook ... Trimalchio’s banquet ... Higbie’s banquet. And close upon them came the vision of glory beyond compare, the spoils of heroic adventure, the bays of triumph, the tribute and the acclaim. Should he summon help from his band? Or should he alone effect this boldest of all bold deeds, he, Captain Bloodeye of the Mary Read! Higbie clenched his fists. “Che-e-e-pn he called reassuringly. Then abandoning his basket half full of tomatoes he crept warily toward the coop.

Here was the door ... his fingers found it, fumbling along the sides ... and the padlock that should have protected the treasure within hung carelessly open and futile on its staple. God send nobody cheeped while he was inside! Summoning all his courage Higbie drew open the door, stepped into the coop, and pulled the door shut behind him.

Thrice-dark now the night enveloped him, stifling in its deepness. Higbie listened a moment in agonizing suspense. Now there were stirrings indeed, claw-y scrapings on wooden perches, feathery rustlings, slumbrous

170

sighs and cackles on all sides; and the air was close and reeked of fowl. But ... was that all? In a panic Higbie struck a match and peered around the small shed. Row upon row of plump hens ... and none to guard!

He must hurry, hurry! "God damn it!" Higbie muttered, extending an arm under a buxom roaster; queer what a spurt of courage one can get with a good round oath! With a momentary flutter and a few mild cackles of complaint the bird came down from her perch, resigning herself to her fate. And now another, and one more, and yet to make full measure a fourth ... and pandemonium erupted on the astounded night. A bird of iniquity, of malice and fiendishness! she flapped her wings and lifted her voice in desperate rebellion. They were all awake now, all the whole coopful of poultry. Paralyzed with horror but clutching fiercely his prizes Higbie found himself in the heart of bedlam. Surely all Maryland must hear! as round and round the chickens stampeded and up and down they flopped and tumbled and louder and louder and louder incredibly rose their squawking.

In a house he had not expected to be so near a window flew up with a bang. Now a door slammed open, now a rush of big-booted feet bore down on the invaded coop. Stricken Higbie waited. Through cracks in the wall he could see a lantern coming. The imprecations of an indignant darkey were balefully audible even over the uproar in the chicken-house. A moment and it would be all over, too late to flee! But the nerves were numb in Higbie's clanking legs and the heart that should have

171

sustained him failed now in his emergency. Petrified he stood.

With a yank the door flung open and in the full glow of the lantern Higbie and the big buck confronted each other. But the screech the darkey emitted as his eyes took in the nightmare apparition of Captain Bloodeye, gray locks straggling from the red kerchief, empurpled eye and leering mouth, shocked the very chickens into silence. Quicker than ever he ran to the rescue of his hens ran now their saviour to his own salvation. Anew the blood pulsed through Higbie's veins. Still clutching his quarry he darted out of the coop and took off at full gallop across the tomato patch.

Frantic cheeps filled the surrounding darkness. Even with vengeance hot behind him Captain Bloodeye could not desert his men. He halted gasping and as soon as breath was in him sounded the two long cheeps of recall. Then on he scurried. Hurrying feet followed him, he discerned, but whether

of friend or foe he did not stay to ascertain. Either could trail him only too easily by the clamor of the four hens that beat their wings and strained their gullets in frenzy. Through the line of willows by the water's edge he hurtled, bouncing from one trunk to another. Into the muck and water he splashed. Ah, yes, the gods be praised! there was a skiff, a blotch of deeper shadow on the water! Now in ten minutes the buccaneers would be safe once more on the Mary Read! The white sails would be lifting into the stars! Up anchor and away to the liberty of the seas!...

With a sigh of relief, with triumph chanting new

172

paecans in the fora of his soul, Higbie climbed into the boat and dropped upon a thwart.... But somebody was here already! a dark shape in the stem!

"Hello!" gasped Higbie. "Is it Ruth? Euax! Tomorrow we dine on chicken!"

The shape shifted slightly with an unfamiliar chuckle. "Nope," said a heavy voice as Higbie's laugh withered on his lips. "Nope, I don't think we do. Leastwise there won't be no chicken dinner in my jail. Now I got a reg'lar cannon here panted right at you and I ask you like a nice pretty pirate to put yer hans up and don't make no noise. I'll get them chickens later."...

IV

It was nothing pretentious in the way of jails, that to which Constable Lammister with ironic protestations of welcome herded at the point of his shotgun Captain Bloodeye and the pirates. "We wasn't expectin Capn Kidd droppin in so pleasant on us," he explained as he held open the one door of the one-room floorless shack and prodded his captives in. "The beds ain't so very soft and the bell don't ring so you needn't mind ringin it fer ice water. But it's the best we can do fer tonight. Maybe tomorrow we can arrange to put youall up somewheres else for a coupla months. It you keep on standin up all night now you won't get your nice pretty close all dirty. Happy dreams! I'll call you in the mornin."

The bolt snapped in a padlock, and then muffled by the dust of the road the footsteps on the constable were

173

heard plodding contentedly away. Gradually as their eyes became used to this multiplied darkness the pirates discerned the small square of the one window that gave them ventilation, an aperture no more than a foot wide and fully two yards from the ground. Kendrick was quick to examine it. "It's ... it's barred, too," he reported lugubriously.

Then Higbie sighed. "Perii pertimui miser! ... And it is all my fault. I don't know what devil possessed me to try such a thing, but I thought it would be so easy when I found the door of the coop was unlocked."

"Higgles," said Ruth ... and Higbie felt her small hand brush across his cheek with a little pat ... "you're the best man of us all! I'm for you, devil damn me if I'm not! I wouldn't have had nerve enough to try it myself!"

"And at that," supplemented Moggs, "the worst they can do to us is fine us for stealing chickens. Hm-m-m-m?"

"Stealing chickens! Ruth's inflection was bitterly ironic. "Lord God, I'd rather be hanged for a pirate than fined for a chicken-thief!... But maybe he'll be a soft southern sort of judge and if I'm nice to him.... Maybe Amy'll find some way to rescue us!"

Higbie winced with remorse and dismay at the thought of the valiant, cheerful, altogether charming Mrs. Potter. His predicament here in Tulls Corner jail was bad enough, but what was hers there on the Mary Read? Spent with worry after the long night's vigil, helpless and delivered into the power of Pudley ... and God knows

174

what he might do, brooding and sullen and vindictive, when word of the capture of the pirate band reached him! "Let us hope she doesn't come ashore," said Higbie. "They'll only arrest her and be all the more vengeful toward us. I believe the constable is convinced now that no one remains on board ship. If she waits there ... or slips away somehow and makes her escape, that will be best."

"But my God!" Kendrick's oath was jangling and out of temper. "We can't wait around and let them try us. I'll be damned if I can afford to go to jail."

This demonstration of petulance on the part of the crew of the Mary Read surprised the pirates into a moment's hush.

"Well, well, well!" said Ruth sharply. "And how important you're getting all of a sudden, Kendrick. What's the matter, child? Are you frightened?"

“No, no, for Christ’s sake, no! But can’t you understand how perfectly ridiculous we would look? And some newspaper will get the story somehow, even down in this forsaken neck of the woods, and——”

“Ah ... ha ... ha!” There was an entirely different note in Moggs’s angular guffaw, a note of hope and of cheer that electrified even Higbie’s tired nerves. “Gentlemen, I have a plan! There is no foundation to this narrow pen; regard, it simply rests on the ground, and it might be possible for us all together to——”

“Tip it over!” cried Ruth. “Ray, Moggsy!”

Tremulous with excitement the pirate band groped to Moggs’s side. At the word of command four earnest

175

pairs of shoulders bent to the effort. Ah, sweet heaven, the whole jail moved, slid five inches across the ground! But the exertion was too great.

“We can’t shove it all the way to the dock,” whispered Moggs wiping the sweat from his brow. “We could, I suppose, and arrive there by noon or thereabouts. But it might attract some attention among the villagers, the sight of Tulls Corner jail creeping down the main street.”

“Let’s jump!” suggested Kendrick. “If we all run and jump, as high as we can ... throw our combined weight on the side ... she may go over.”

“You’re just bound to get yourself out of trouble, aren’t you, Kenny?” There was a palpable sneer in the remark. Higbie himself caught the flavor of it and wondered. But what had come over Kendrick?

Six feet across was the breadth of Tulls Corner jail, no very great distance to run. But the energy of desperation swelled in the hearts of the buccaneers as they took their places against the front wall. Came Moggs’s voice husky with earnestness: “One ... two ... three!”

Five feet surely Higbie jumped, five feet in one wild hop from the ground, five feet into the heavens where stars pace the birdways and constables are not. His nose hit the plank wall a smacking biff, and a frantic lunge by the starboard jumper caught him a wallop behind the port ear. But ... euax! the wall before him moved! With a great lurch, even as he slid dazed and sprawling down to the ground, Tulls Corner jail toppled over on its side. From shuttered house to house reverberated the

176

crash of its falling; thunderous it piled upon the dark front of the village store, and echoed back to the fire engine house, and caromed thence off across the Chaptonk. Would not all the place awake? Would not the constable himself come posting furious with his shot-gun to recapture the buccaneer band? But ah, the night, the sky, the fresh breeze from the water!

Captain Bloodeye, dizzy from biff and wallop, gathered himself from the dirt. "Forward, bully boys!" he whispered.

At the double-quick the pirates trotted down the empty lane. How many of the villagers started in their sleep as their bastille collapsed we shall never know, for all it would seem did merely turn over and shut their eyes again. Not a peering face at a window, not the screek of a rusty hinge, as Captain Bloodeye and his men made good their escape. And now they were at the wharf, and now—even as the first blanching in the east warned them of morning soon—they tiptoed out upon it. But a sudden consideration brought Captain Bloodeye to a halt. Where was the skiff?

Ah, where indeed! Scuttling breathless with anxiety the pirates hunted up and down the wharf, up and down the beach on either side. The skiff was gone, and there was not so much as a board to be found that would float so little as Captain Bloodeye out to the Mary Read. As far as any craft was concerned they might as well be on a desert island. And the east whitened with remorseless expedition, tints of coral and pearl were sifting through the stars, and the last tatters of night were wisping away

177

from the trees within whose branches they were caught. On the dock at last Captain Bloodeye, panting and dismayed, marshalled his band.

"How many can swim?" he inquired, knowing full well that all could—but him. "Every man who can swim, go ahead. We can't call, and there wouldn't be any use trying to swing the schooner in to pick me up. Never mind me; I'll ... I'll come out all right." Higbie tried to smile. "And please give Mrs. Potter my ... my very warmest good wishes and tell her I'm sorry to have entangled her in this sorry predicament.... And you'd better hurry, you know! No mutiny! The first rascal dares to disobey me, I'll ... I'll eat his heart out."

Had Captain Bloodeye kept his word he would have feasted on the tender organ that throbbed so joyously in the breast of his boatswain, for Devildamn with a strut took her position by his side. "Anybody who wants to cut and run can go it," she declared, staring, Higbie thought, a little too

patently at the disgraced Kendrick "I'm not going to desert old Higgles now!"

She was too suspicious, Higbie thought, wincing himself as he saw the scarlet mount in the boy's ears. For Kendrick would not desert!

Three hearts in all were dedicated rousingly to Captain Bloodeye's platter, and that hardy buccaneer found himself absurdly and unpiratically husky with emotion over such loyalty, and turned quite speechless to the dawn.

Ruth sat down with a sigh of fatigue. "Might as well

178

be comfortable, bully boys," she advised. "Old Glory will be along with his cannon pretty soon to take us back to the hoosegow. Won't he get a jolt though when he finds it upside down and empty! How I'd like to see his face!"

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" Moggs brooded spitefully upon the idyllic village of Tulls Corner, dreaming indeed beneath its elms and cottonwoods. "But we must remember that the dignity of the law is never felt quite so enormously as by its most humble minions. Constables ... and in particular country constables. Hm-m-m-m? And by overturning the jail we have perpetrated an insult to that dignity which will be resented not only by our captor but also by every citizen in the village. The magistrate himself, who might otherwise be inclined to lenience, would certainly be moved to the utmost severity. On the other hand, if we did not go to trial under such a handicap, we might find some way to exonerate ourselves. Hm-m-m-m-m?"

Captain Bloodeye drearily pondered the hint. It consorted ill with his heroic pulse, but now that valor availed nothing it was not cowardly to be discreet. "Gentlemen!" he faltered.

Wearily the pirates turned back up the lane toward the overthrown jail. A shred of smoke now coiling out of a kitchen chimney alarmed them to greater speed. Grayly they took their places under the gaping aperture. Four earnest pairs of arms strained to the task, tugged and jerked frantically. At last it moved. Like a jaw that

179

snapped down on them the jail righted itself, rocked for a moment from side to side, and was quiet.

Once again safe in durance sweet the pirates stared solemnly at each other. It was Devildainn Pudley gave the first laugh. Higbie was first asleep.

Chapter Eleven

I

ONE hundred and ten according to the last census was the population of Tulls Corner, Maryland. There had been a decline of some seven per cent during the last five decades, but Tulls Corner bothered itself little over this phenomenon. Indeed on occasion the citizenry of the village felt that a decrease of at least fifty per cent more would be no loss at all. Such an occasion was the morning of the historic trial of Captain Bloodeye Chaffinch and his band, when one hundred and twelve persons, counting Constable Lammister's brother and sister-in-law who were visiting him from Easton, presented themselves for admission at the court room over the fire brigade headquarters, which boasted a crowded standing and sitting capacity of something less than fifty.

The court was packed and the rest of Tulls Corner was jostling at the door by ten o'clock, so swiftly did the news wing from woodshed to breakfast table, when the pirates were escorted to judgment. In four hard chairs before the bench the pirates were seated, and Tulls Corner closed gaping and shuffling and stertorous with babble behind them ... and the long wait began. Justice is not to be hurried in Maryland.

181

This incontrovertible fact Higbie pondered minute by minute, staring at the wall in front of him, blank with a very fourth dimensional blankness. At intervals his eyes would stray to one side where on a table lay the exhibits in the case, mute evidence which Higbie found it almost impossible to associate with himself. Four antique-shop pistols, two dirks with steel crusted by the patina of generations, two baskets half filled with assorted vegetables, and four hens, the latter tied fast together by their legs and deep now in the coma of exhaustion after the hideous night. Chickens, pistols, stolen tomatoes and swords. What part had these in the life of a staid professor of Latin?... But indeed, what part had Latin in the life of a scoundrel whose destiny was now so infamously tangled up with swords, stolen tomatoes, pistols and chickens? Higbie gazed upon the table, and it seemed he could see himself lying there between the poultry and the

pistols, trussed up like the hens ... eheu ... And what would Minnie think of him now!

Captain Bloodeye pulled himself vigorously together. What, he reflected more pertinently, would Mrs. Potter think? brave, faithful, charming Mrs. Potter! And what would Ruth? Higbie stole a sidelong glance at her sitting by his side. At that moment he perceived she was peering too at him. She ... winked.

But a door slammed, portentous footfalls sounded, and Constable Lammister's boot on his shin roused Higbie acutely from his preoccupation. "Oyez oyez oyez!"

The whole courtroom was standing now, buzzing like

182

a swarm of superbees that hived square on one's tragus; justice was mounting the bench. Higbie stared awestruck, and the venerable personage upon whose caprice the fate of the Mary Read hung returned Higbie's gaze; and the four eyes involved in this reciprocal stare clasped each other and clung.

"Fore God!" ejaculated Judge Weems. "But ... but it's Dr. Chaffinch! Can it be Dr. Chaffinch?"

From fingers shaken with wonderment the gavel of authority clattered to the bench. A moment Judge Weems hesitated. Then impulsively he leaped from his platform and strode to the prisoners, holding his hand eagerly ahead. Higbie accepted it, half understanding but not yet with positive recognition.

"Dr. Chaffinch! Don't you remember me, Dr. Chaffinch? Robert Weems, of the class of ninety-nine, you know! Don't you remember, Dr. Chaffinch? But what can all this mean! Your eye, Dr. Chaffinch! and your ear, and your nose, and ... and, God save us! your costume, Dr. Chaffinch! What can it mean?"

Now at last recognition flowered in Higbie ... remembrance of that mezzotint of the Circus Maximus which, first token of revolt, he had put in place of Minnie's Good Shepherd over the mantelpiece at Walbrook ... the face of the boy who, spokesman for his companions, had officially presented the tribute to him ... Robert Weems! But before Higbie could do more than smile a greeting Judge Weems wheeled on the courtroom.

"Case dismissed!" he thundered. "Constable Lammister,

183

next time you will be more prudent before you insult people of quality. Clear the court!"

Out of the hush of pentecostal amazement which plastered the attendant half of Tulls Corner wobbled now a yellow African voice, pale with anxiety. "Wh-wh-wh- wh-wh-when does ah get mah hens, please sah, jedge, Massa Bob, y'honah, please sah!"

Paraclete with wrath Judge Weems lowered upon the profaner. "Jellyroll, I am just before sending you to jail. By all that's holy, is the Court to be browbeaten by a blackamoor?" To the palsied Lammister turned the magistrate. "Constable, you will take Dr. Chaffinch's poultry to the market and have them prepared at once for the oven!"

II

IN the bottom of a dusty desk in his private office—a desk cluttered with many years' accumulation of warrants, decrees, judgments, copies of the Chronicle, drafts of speeches plotted against the time when a supine Maryland should rise at last and insist on his accepting the governorship, unpaid bills and back-broken tomes—Judge Weems retrieved a bottle of apple jack and he placed it before his guests.

"But Dr. Chaffinch!" Weems made haste to inquire when they were all seated. "What have the newspapers been saying about you? You are a national sensation! And not only you but also the companions with whom

184

you are said to have ... ah!... vanished. What, Dr. Chaffinch, can all this pothor be about?"

On top of the desk, not buried in dusty neglect or dustier Volsteadian concealment, were the Chronicles of the fortnight. To Higbie Weems handed them, but Ruth's impatience was not to be ignored; she was avidly at them, and Kendrick no less, while even Moggs ventured to help himself from Higbie's lap.

So it was that the story came to Higbie in a garbled version which all the more heightened his confusion and dismay. First, he conned that hysterical dispatch from New York where cordons of cops and squads of detectives had been scouring in vain fastness and purlieu of the dingy quarters in search of the fugitives. Their descriptions were what most astounded Higbie: viz., Widowed Classicist, Mad Philanthropist, Talented Society

Belle and Evangelist of National Renown.... In the second Chronicle Higbie read dazedly of the grand prohibition raid at Washington in the shadow of the Capitol itself, on the theory of a colossal bootleg scheme concocted in a secret closet of Moggs's house.... In the third Chronicle Higbie found at last the first story in the series—Rosicrucian rites, moon-worship on the lonely Chaffinch estate, battle with the avenging, Klan—and Higbie groaned aloud with horror.

An answering groan came from Moggs, who had just learned of the search of his dwelling on Gilmor street made by a group of plain-clothes men, who confessed themselves baffled in their efforts to find the secret chamber

185

where this "Faust of Baltimore" performed his alchemy.

These hollow utterances were punctuated by a sharp "Well, I'll be damned!" from Ruth, who had but that moment read the interview with Dean Thrump at Bryn Mawr, in which the dean admitted Ruth had been expelled from college for numerous violation of the attendance rules and in general, with lickerish suggestiveness, for "deplorable contumacy of conduct, and bad example to the other students."

With one thought three pairs of eyes focussed upon Kendrick and observed that that youth, sole representative of the press in their midst, was absorbed in the perusal of a story.

"What," remarked Ruth presently, "are you blushing for, Kenny?"

Acid was Ruth's inflection, and Kendrick glanced up quickly, and he was indeed quite scarlet, Higbie remarked. But, "What am I blushing for?" Kendrick retorted. "Why do you ask me that? Have you any notion I wrote all this hokum?" He flung his copy of the Chronicle on the floor at the feet of his challenger. "I'm blushing because ... Well, because it's such a damned outrage; and even if I'm not guilty of it, my profession is."

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" Moggs interceded. "You may believe Kendrick, I assure you. Many and many a time Kenny has told me of his abomination for the newspaper business. But what was he to do? Hm-m-m-m? What were you to do, eh, Kendrick? ... And surely there is

186

no indication that this preposterous story of moon-worship comes from him. He knew the truth!"

Weems could no longer contain himself. "Dr. Chaffinch, do you mean to say these accounts are false?" He slapped the table a vigorous smack. "Why, I had actually believed them, Dr. Chaffinch! For generations now the Chronicle has been the one absolutely dependable paper in the country! ... But yes, it has gone to pieces recently. It has become a cheap sensation-monger, sycophant of the mob. Would you believe it, Dr. Chaffinch, the Chronicle actually is printing cross-word puzzles!"

Higbie gulped and blinked his eyes. "Of course we should not blame Kenny for stories which obviously could not have come from him, since in very truth he was on board the Mary Read with us when they were written. But the fact remains ... Conclamatum est! The fact remains that we are all ruined!"

"The Moggs Foundation is utterly ruined," nodded Moggs.

Silence fell athwart the gathering, until it was broken finally by Weems, with a laugh intended to be heartening. "I'm sure," he expostulated, "it isn't so bad as all that! You can return to Baltimore, you know, Dr. Chaffinch, and tell people the truth. Indeed, you can telephone Baltimore this minute from this office; telephone the Chronicle and tell them——"

"No, no, for Christ's sake no!" broke in Kendrick. "What you might say this end of the line would be all right of course. But what the reporter looking for more sensation, on the other end, would make of it, how he

187

would distort it, you can't say. Our only hope is wait until we get back."

Moggs smiled ... the old smile informed with pathos which so often touched Higbie, but infinitely more pathetic now. "In the last analysis," he counseled gently, "it isn't the refutation of slander in a newspaper that counts; it is the allegation. The charge has been made. It will stand against us forever, though the gods themselves proclaim us innocent. Hm-m-m-m? ... And can't we live it down? It would be like trying to live down a humpback.... Ah ... ha ... ha! And even if we could convince them of the truth, that would be hardly less damaging than the fiction."

"But what is the truth, Dr. Chaffinch?" inquired Weems in the ensuing hush. "It could not be anything heinous!"

"The truth is..." said Higbie, and the silliest grin in the world he felt was on his face, the most perfectly asinine grin; "the truth is..." he repeated while a bolder accent of Captain Bloodeye crept into his voice, "that we are pirates."

III

NOW upon this embarrassed confession such confusion seized Judge Weems that even Ruth could no more than watch. His mouth dropped wide, his fists clenched tight upon the edges of his desk, his brows soared in arches that fairly invited armies to pass beneath them. And then Judge Weems passed a hand before his eyes as one bewildered by a vision of available grails; and then

188

once more he confronted his quondam preceptor with a stare of amazement.... "Yes, yes, I know, but ... but ...

Grabbing suddenly the bottle without a thought for his guests Weems poured a deep portion and tipped it into his throat. He leaped from his chair and began to pace the floor.

"Of course, Dr. Chaffinch, of course, I might have guessed it, I did guess it, there was conclusive evidence of the fact, you are dressed as pirates; but ... I had not completely realized it until this moment. Some things are incredible though one see them and hear them, you must understand, and it is incredible that you are pirates, and yet here you are, indubitably pirates." In the eyes of Weems smouldered the fire of inspiration and Higbie quailed before him.

"I am going to tell you now, Dr. Chaffinch, a story which will seem no less unbelievable to you, and yet I assure you, Dr. Chaffinch, that it is true." Transfixed by Weems's wild glare Higbie nodded as if hypnotized. "Very well," resumed the judge with a convulsive snort. "To proceed with my story:

"The estate of Weems on the American continent was founded by the first Robert Willoughby Weems. Coming from the old country his ship was captured by pirates, and rather than have his throat cut by the scound ... by the Gentlemen Rovers, Dr. Chaffinch, he joined them. For more than a year he remained with them, awaiting his opportunity to escape. At last he made his way to shore at Topsail Inlet, got employment in the

189

Carolinas, and eventually came to the Eastern Shore where he took possession of the broad acres ever since held by my family."

Here Weems stared defiantly at the company, but hearing no interpellation on his last remark he plunged again into his recital.

“On his death-bed, Dr. Chaffinch, Robert Weems confided to his son a small map wrapped in oilskin——”

“Treasure trove!” shouted Ruth embracing the astonished magistrate in his most solemn moment with a whoop of glee and dancing him three times round. “And you’ve got the map still and we’ll all go find the treasure!”

Weems suffered himself to be violently disembraced, staggered a moment to regain his balance, saved himself against the wall, and ... nodded. Once again he drew his hand before his eyes. Behind them were what visions! Once more the ancient estate of his fathers, the old mansion opened up and gay with lights, servants passing back and forth, and ... on to Annapolis! Maryland, my Maryland! ... The precious secret asset that might miraculously save him from despoliation!

“It is the map of Persimmons Cove, down the Bay from here, and it shows where lies buried the booty of Captain Steele Bonnet,” Weems concluded, regaining in spite of his dizziness the mien of tragedy.

“But where is this map?” asked Higbie, quivering with new excitement.

“It is...”—and Weems marched heroically to his desk, pulling open the deepest and dustiest drawer— “here!”

190

Now here indeed it was and from its covert repository Weems took it and about it the pirates gathered in an excited huddle. It was a square of parchment roughly platted in red and black, here a tree and there a tree, shore-line and shoal-water, mounds indicated by hump and pyramid, brooklets by meander line, marsh by little reed-like strokes. And there was latitude and longitude —36:54 north by 76:10 west from Greenwich—written in to be sure in fine gentlemanly chirography: Stede Bonnet was a gentleman! The northerly and easterly directions were thus and so, delicately arrowed. And here——

“There’s the dead man!” gasped Ruth agog. “See the knife in him! Whee! And under him is the treasure and the diamonds and the rubies and the pieces of eight and the gold ... the gold——”

“Ingots,” prompted Kendrick breathing hard.

Higbie ... tingled on and on like a clock. He could feel his moustaches stiffen out of the wonted droop of nearly half a century. Enchanted possibilities it took his utmost imagination to grasp soared above him;

vision of that chest bulging with doubloons, heaving up out of a hole in the sand on the shoulders of four straining men; glitter of tangible opulence, louis d'or trickling between his fingers.

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" Moggs leaned back in his chair and put the ends of his fingers together and contemplated them meditatively. "But why did none of your ancestors hunt for this treasure, Judge Weems?"

Impatiently Weems cleared his throat. "To be candid,

191

one of them did seek the treasure. My maternal grand-uncle, Thomas Snyghe, went to Persimmons Cove in the year 1816. The record of his voyage is preserved in the archives of my family. With him went two friends and six men from the estate..." Weems hesitated. "Thomas Snyghe was the only survivor of that ill-fated expedition."

Minor shudders jostled up Higbie's back as he gazed upon the seigneur of Tulls Corner.

"Thomas Snyghe crawled into the house something more than a year later, in a state of incurable dementia. He maundered of ghosts that came clanking in their chains, broken-necked ghosts whose heads lay over on their shoulders; cursing, roaring, fighting, buccaneer ghosts that even went off with bottles of whisky whole and could be heard drinking them in the night. A gale blew up that wrecked the ship. With drowning and desertion and superstitious terror the company was dispersed."

Gravely Weems contemplated his guests. "That, I must inform you candidly, is the tragedy and the mystery of Persimmons Cove. I am not one myself that believes in ghosts. But even if I did, I think I could brave them ... on such a quest as this one."

"And so after your uncle got back nobody ever tried it again?" Ruth was obviously on the verge of bursting. "God almighty, God almighty, think of it, Kenny! All the gold! ... Why, we could go back and buy Bryn Mawr whole and have it all torn down ... on top of old Thrump!"

192

"My maternal grand-uncle," Weems corrected gently. "Thomas Snyghe. And as for why the rest of my ancestors did not go ... Why, to be sure, my own grandfather went, but he made only a casual search and of course found nothing. Of course he found nothing! Since then the family has

affected not to believe the treasure is there. Fore God, gentlemen, I believe it is!" Burningly he scrutinized the company. "It's ... it's got to be there!"

"Hoo-ray Weemsy!" Ruth was all around the room with jubilation. "I know it's there and you come aboard with us and find it! Share and share alike!"

Higbie roused abruptly out of his trance, with a final amused glance at the chart, whose dwindling magic left it but a child's prank with paper and ink. What were they doing all this time, loitering in Judge Weems's office and exchanging silly fancies, while back on board the Mary Read ...

Up stood Higbie with a jerk. What, perii, might not already have happened to Mrs. Potter! Lovely, arch, sympathetic, loyal Mrs. Potter, so faithful to her master through all the adversities of the last three weeks, so unbegrudging and uncomplaining! There in the company of that merciless Hosea of a whiplash theology, that klansman gnawing his nails long since with wrath and vengefulness in his constraint! And nothing to protect her from him save his promise exacted by coercion!

"Gentlemen!" Higbie exclaimed rent by sudden apprehension. "Are we to abandon Mrs. Potter to the mercy of that ... of Pudley? Let us make all speed back to

193

the Mary Read, lest there be a tragedy indeed awaiting us there."

In an access of impatience Higbie started for the door. But four there were that followed him now, Weems pausing not even to find his hat, which had become lost somewhere in the clutter of the judicial chamber and which was, its owner reflected, no valid reason even had he not worn it five years for delaying the treasure hunt.

At the foot of the stairs leading down to the lane sat a disconsolate figure resignedly waiting. It was Constable Lammister and beneath each arm was a large parcel wrapped in heavy brown paper.

"Here's them hens a Jelly roll's, Mister Bob," he muttered, doffing his felt. A stare pricked him out of his inadvertence. "Here's them hens a yourn," he amended weakly.

IV

THERE was further hindrance, while the bottom of Higbie's dread sank beyond sounding, at the dock. The skiff was still missing. A confession was

drawn from the Constable, whose very badge shone less starrily now in his discomfiture and whose strut had become a flaccid shamle, that the boat was tied up snugly at his, Lammister's, own landing. He was dispatched running to get it under threats of contempt of court ... and Higbie yearned helplessly across the broad Chaptonk.

Some distance out lay the Mary Read and perhaps on board her all was well; there was no sign of anything

194

untoward. But indeed there was no sign of anything at all or any body on the pirate ship as she rode serenely at anchor, the Jolly Roger flapping lazily at her peak. A very hint of desolation hovered upon her, Higbie observed, and his unrest reached a pitch almost of panic. Moggs too was grayly subdued and swept the water with a worried perlustration as if looking for ... for bodies. The voluble chatter of Ruth and the guffaws of Weems as he listened to her tale of the adventures of the pirate band irked Higbie exceedingly but he forebore to interrupt them. Why mar their gaiety with such dismal bodings? ... Kendrick had gone to the post-office....

Down the Chaptonk toward the dock the skiff was coming now, lurching through the shattered ripples under the spasmodic strokes of the Constable. In a minute Higbie was clambering down into it, and in another the pirates were shoving off. They were pointed at last toward the schooner ... and to be sure, mused Higbie in the bow, there was no sinister stain of scarlet coiling under the Mary Read's thick quarter. But even now there was no indication of life on board.... Brave, good-natured, indulgent, amiable Amy! In what anguish of loneliness and terror she must have writhed as murderous night led in the haggard dawn and her companions failed to return! And then ... had she deserted the ship? Had Pudley...?

Sounds of human occupancy at last drifted over the shimmering Chaptonk to Higbie's rigid ears. He listened in vast surprise. They did not sound like lamentation, they were not the drone of Pudley iterating the panged

195

supplications of David, neither were they the sobbing of Mrs. Potter in her travail. They were indeed ... as the skiff drew nigh one could not doubt that they were ... the voice of Mrs. Potter caroling "Be-e-lieve me, if all those endearing young charms" and the voice of the preacher supplying an

enthusiastic bass.... To a mellisonant cadence the duet drooped. A moment's hush, and then there was a burst of quite carefree merriment and a lusty clapping of two pairs of hands.

"Well, sir, I'm a son of a rum puncheon!" panted Ruth. "I guess papa isn't a fast worker! Hm-m-m-m, Moggsy?"

Higbie avoided all eyes....

V

HIGBIE had not felt like sleeping and he had not intended to sleep. But after such a dinner as that which Mrs. Potter prepared for the induction of Robert Weems into the pirate crew, after all the turmoil of such a twenty-four hours, there was a weariness in his bones that betrayed him, lying out on the companion beneath the stars, listening to the purl of the water, his head pillowed on a coil of cable.... When he awoke he saw that a momentous shifting had scattered new stars throughout the sky, a shifting several hours in breadth. He found himself shivering a little with the chill that seeped from the woodsy shore, and he arose briskly and stepped down to the deck and started forward.

Everyone else must be in his berth, Higbie concluded:

196

Ruth and Mrs. Potter in the tiny cabin aft, Pudley in the anchorite loneliness of the forecastle where he had established himself and the others amidships. He tiptoed lest he disturb the sleepers between decks ... and he was just about to let himself down the ladder when he discerned dimly in the starlight a prone figure some distance forward. Higbie pondered a minute staring. He should really investigate; someone might be ill. And presently he tiptoed cautiously toward that shadow.

Only when he was quite close did he perceive it was not one but two bodies there, and that they were Ruth and Kendrick ... rapt in the tranquil slumber of youth, breathing quietly together, her head on his arm....

Macte! said Higbie within himself with a chuckle, as he turned and tiptoed back toward the hatch. They have made up. For indeed they had not been half so friendly all that day, since Kendrick's inexplicable petulance in the jail, and since that brief minute of suspicion when they first glimpsed the Chronicles. They have made up, that dear girl and boy, thought Higbie

smiling with happiness as he put foot to rung and began his descent into the hold.

But a sudden thought smote Higbie with such a pang of dismay that he nearly fell the rest of the distance, and had great trouble in his bewilderment to find his own bunk. Into it he tumbled without undressing, and there he lay on his back with eyes wide staring into the darkness. For it was one thing to make up, and it was quite another thing to ...

Something had happened tonight, Higbie realized at

197

last, that was not what he had accepted all his life as right. It filled him with premonitions of disaster, and with the torment of guilt, too; for was he not himself in part blameworthy? Was he not wholly to blame?

It was mortal sin and ineradicable shame, it was for Ruth at least what men have come to denominate ruin ... but the terms and conditions of it left Higbie baffled. Surely with such an affront to heaven charnel fires must flare in the firmament, and pestilential spirits shriek and gibber in the shrouds, and thunder burst above the vessel and blot her into the gloating depths! Yet there were no such portents; there were but ... stars, the stars. Night gemmed and odorous that spreads her mantle softly upon eyes filled with tears and hearts when they are filled with love. Love!...

Ah, what would Minnie think!

Now Higbie thought of Minnie and of a night that soon would be half a century ago, when she and he took their vows in a bare little Methodist chapel and went home together. Laughing but tremulous with excitement, with an elation almost too great to be born, with a tenderness so poignant that it seemed surely the heart must break with tenderness, they walked hand in hand down the street to the lodging house where they had taken rooms. They lingered, and yet how eager they had been! They dreamed about the future, they planned careers together, their sort of careers: study, and degree after degree until the pinnacle was attained, and books—scholarly books which should establish Higbie in the world's admiration. But all their dreams were a veil and a dissemblance,

198

the future was not in their hearts, the present only was.

Then they were in their room together, and the door was shut, and they looked at each other; and Higbie held out his arms.... The stars through the

open window, the stars, the stars. And the reaching out for the first time of two spirits to meet and clasp each other and find a moment of companionship after the utter loneliness in which every spirit shivers acold and terrified until that mingling....

Love. Is love not good?

But there had been of course, for him and Minnie, the scrawl of an indifferent, hurried, expectorating clerk on a printed form; and there had been the perfunctory sanction of a strange man reading from a book, with five dollars in his pocket. Then by logic the scrawl and the recitation were the good, the holy things in union. Rather they were the necessary conditions without which love was vicious and wicked and debased. These things brought it to pass that love was marriage....

Up there on deck was nothing but love; and none but the Master to write his sanction in stars on the sky, and none but the River to repeat his godless pagan benediction.

Marriage.... Ubi tu Caius ego Caia.... The cadenced formula came back into Higbie's mind with a beauty and a sanctity he never before had felt in it. Wherever thou Caius shall be, there am I Caia thy wife.... What could have been the formula of reply, the lover's pledge and assurance? It was lost now, buried

199

with the past which fashioned it. But the lover gave fire and water to his beloved, and when she was brought to his dwelling he carried her in his arms over the threshold, lest she stumble and evil blight their happiness. Then they sat side by side upon two chairs covered with one cover.

That was marriage among the Romans. True, there was no shirt-sleeved and suspended clerk to scribble and no hired preacher to bless. Yet notwithstanding these defects were not those ancient weddings beautiful, and did they not endure sometimes until the duration of them made them epic? And were they not, if a God's in heaven, as binding as our own? For, Higbie argued, there is but one factor in the end that can make a union binding upon earth, no matter what words are said or sanctions written, and that is perpetuity of devotion. And devotion is the good thing and the beauty in union.

So, struggling all alone in his berth with this monstrous problem, Higbie presently became aware that the form and the rite are not the peressential factor, but the profundity of the love. And he knew in his heart that Ruth

and Kendrick were sufficiently married even now, for he had watched them making love distantly—and yet how closely!—by day and he had seen them sleeping thus this night....

But of course, as soon as they reached land ... suggested a dim remote voice; and Higbie nodded sleepily, and drifted into dreams in which he found himself

200

frocked and bebooked, and all the girls in the world were at his right hand and all the boys were at his left, and he married them one and all ... which caused great enjoyment indeed among them, and they presented him with a huge mezzotint of the Good Shepherd Watching His Flocks by Night, inscribed "From the Class of 1926."

201

Chapter Twelve

I

MRS. POTTER was sitting in the lee of the companion and beside her was a stack of copies of the Chronicle, all that Weems had brought aboard; and Higbie, as soon as he could politely break away from Moggs in the usual morning lesson in navigation, joined her. He found her strangely moved this morning, for she wiped an orphan tear from her dark eye.

“This is a sad occasion for me Dr. Chaffinch and I'm right glad you're here because you may be able to help me out,” she remarked.

“But what, my dear Mrs. Potter, can be the matter?” Higbie inquired anxiously.

“Lordy Lordy!” Mrs. Potter sighed. “It's nothin that is the matter now, it's what did happen makes me feel so bad, I jest see the date on this paper and it reminded me of pore Herbie, that was my first; he got hit by a load of rock in the stone quarry one time and he wasn't ever the same again, it broke his head so's you could push him in the front part of it and the back part'd rise right up. He passed out fourteen years ago, on August eighteen it was, and that's next week, and every year I put an ad in the Chronicle for him. I was tryin to think what

202

I could put in that would be kind of nice this year. Now I was jest readin this one, of course it's got ‘mother’ in it and that wouldn't hardly do for Herbie, but I was figurin out how I could put his name in there instead of ‘mother,’ anyway it goes like this:...”

Mrs. Potter, restoring to her nose a pair of spectacles, found the right copy of the Chronicle and read.

Mother dear, you are always on our mind,
Forever it shall be;
To every road that will ever wind,
Mother, dear, you, we shall see.

Mother, dear, it seems like a dream
Since your smiles have passed away.
The smiles just like a sunbeam,
Mother, dear, we all hope to see them again some day.

Higbie turned with a sensation of someone calling him and perceived that the eyes of the Rev. Mr. Pudley, who was hovering unnecessarily at the mainmast, were bearing upon him in a fixed and truculent glare. Higbie retorted with one of his best scowls and swung back to the lovely lady who had appealed to him in her distress.

“I don’t like it myself so very well,” murmured Mrs. Potter, removing her spectacles and putting the Chronicle aside. “But Herbie always did have a sweet smile, especially after he got his head broke. But it don’t seem sad enough, does it?” She smiled a little, wistfully. “There’s one pome I been savin till I felt jest that sad, I don’t know, I thought maybe I could use it this year, but ... I don’t know. It goes:

203

I mourn for you in silence,
But not with outward show,
For the heart that mourns sincerely,
Mourns silently and low.

“That’s right sad, don’t you think so Dr. Chaffinch?”

“Of course, dear Mrs. Potter,” Higbie agreed gazing with wrung sympathy at his companion, “death is very sad. It occurs to me that if one is truly mourning silently and low, advertising one’s grief in the Chronicle is hardly fitting. In Horace——”

“Now here’s one,” observed Mrs. Potter replacing her spectacles, “about an old lady that died in a fire:

It was a sad Sunday morning in July
That God sent us that dreadful fire,
And the shock was so great that our dear
Grandmother's life was at stake
And in a few short hours she lay cold in death
before our eyes.

"I never did put anythin in about the way Herbie passed out and I thought I could put sompmhm in tellin how he passed out, I could make it a Tuesday mornin in August and tell about God sendin that rock that hit him on the head..."

Higbie pondered. "But doesn't it appear to you that it would be rather ... profane to blame God for it?"

"That's jest what I was thinkin Dr. Chaffinch that it wasn't quite right to blame God for startin the fire that burned the pore old lady up."

It was a relief to have Mrs. Potter smile, Higbie meditated. It was a relief to know that this moment was not

204

one of unappeasable passionate grief but a more tranquil memoried sorrow; and that the gesture of the memorial verse was not that of heartbreak but the deliberate proffer of tribute from a companion who did not forget. Good, faithful Amy!... Twining his vision southwest as if to some lodestone Higbie perceived the figure of Weems —garbed now appropriately in black breeches and red sash and full buccaneer accessories—loitering at the taffrail. Weems was obtrusively prompt to grin and put one foot forward in Higbie's direction, but Higbie turned a brusque shoulder upon him.

"Yet sometimes even a brief phrase can be more eloquent than the longest poem," Higbie resumed. "The Romans for instance had certain customary phrases of farewell, and they were not ... not too languishing, dear Mrs. Potter. Ave anima Candida ... terra tibi levis sit ... Couldn't we attempt a paraphrase? Hail shining spirit, may earth rest lightly upon thee.... How modest that would be, how genuine, how beautiful!"

Mrs. Potter was heard distinctly to ... giggle. "It don't sound quite like Herbie, hail shining spirit don't."

And when Higbie considered he himself saw a certain incongruity in thus hailing the shining spirit of an extinct quarry foreman with a broken skull. What should he advise, what comfort offer this gentle spirit so unwontedly troubled in reminiscence of a past that had been happy for her?

“You see, Dr. Chaffinch, I kinda set my heart on a long pome this year.”

Yes indeed, it must be long, Higbie acknowledged, and

205

there must be tears in it. It must be some expression that would move Amy herself, give her the sensation of tribute and an adequate public profession; it was for herself she planned to publish the memorial, and not for the world which might read it, and not for the wraith of him she addressed it to. “Dear Mrs. Potter——”

“Lordy Lordy the beans’ll be all burned up, excuse me a minute Dr. Chaffinch while I run down and see about them, and won’t you try to think up sompmhm for me, I don’t know what I’m goin to do.”

II

NOW what, thought Higbie as he watched Mrs. Potter founder down the companionway, a strange creature this was! She would not do at all with the Dr. Inchlings, the Quoggses, the Murchthaws and the Updegroves. The very notion made him chuckle. Mrs. Potter with such a chapter of memorial poesy as that which she had just opened for him would precipitate a torrent of titters from the literarily inclined Quoggses. And as for prim plump little Mrs. Murchthaw, one glance at Mrs. Potter would cause that sempiternal and wary virgin to snort shame, tilt her nose and fling out of the house. Mrs. Potter was so ... so human.

That was it, she was so human. Intellectually of course quite undeveloped. Her language was atrocious, her taste the condensation of vulgarity, and her understanding doubtless would forever be treacle in matters bookish or scholarly. From the standpoint of educated

206

intelligence she was precisely what she came to his house at Walbrook, worlds now away in the past, purporting to be: a housekeeper. But no, no, she was not a housekeeper, no matter how well she managed domestic affairs.

Housekeepers are not human. They have discernible to the lofty eye no qualities save one—honesty. Within the category of the honest they can be graded further only in point of talent in cooking, in scrubbing and sweeping, in tasks of the kind. On the other hand the human qualities have nothing to do with honesty. They are several and they were all to be found in Mrs. Potter, she was a veritable golden stook of them; she was sympathetic, tender, brave, faithful, good-humored, companionable, uncomplaining, generous ... She was so amiably human!

Of course her endowment of these human qualities would seem at first blush an inadequate reason for making her the proposition he had in mind. Higbie chuckled again at the thought. But ... eja age! He was resolute. He would make his proposition however preposterous it might appear. He had deliberated it now for two days, ever since the Mary Read slid out of the idle Chaptonk on further derring-do. He would have made it already this morning, he had turned his courage to more than concert pitch in preparation for the Eroica of his determination, had he not found her so distraught when he approached.

Higbie fidgeted with impatience and excitement. It was taking her curiously long to tend to those beans. He got up and went to the companionway and peered down.

207

There she was to be sure in the galley busy about the stove. With her was that unconscionable Pudley washing the dishes, and they were chattering quite merrily together. Ah, well ... Mrs. Potter would not confide her distress to every one! Dear, loyal Mrs. Potter!

But the proposition.... Higbie paced the deck. He found himself always pacing the deck now when he considered it. The whole thing intoxicated him, it was so new, so daring, so romantic! He would walk up and down, faster and faster and faster, and his breath would come in agitated pants, and he would jerk out of his preoccupation to find his arms waving wildly; and then he would be very ashamed of himself and wonder painfully if anyone had seen.... It was so ... enchanted....

III

“HEIGH-O, Higgles baby!” sang Ruth coming up behind him, and she swung into step with him as he paced, lighting a cigarette and looking at

him quizzically between puffs. "Well, if you aren't the wildest old pirate I ever saw in my life!" She put her fingers on his brow and made as if to smooth away creases there. "Higgles, tell me something. Are you in love?"

Higbie exclaimed with candid surprise. "In love, Ruth! I? But how ridiculous that would be, at my age!"

Ruth shook her head. "O, hell! And I'd been thinking all along you were one of us, and now you begin to

208

squawk about your age! Let me tell you I'm in love ... and I like it! O, Higgles, you ought to try it! It's the funniest thing, you go around gasping all day long, and you can't eat or ... or sleep or do anything. Didn't you see I was in love?"

..."Ruth, dear Ruth," said Higbie, "I did think you might be in love, watching you and Kendrick together, seeing you so happy. I'm sure I wish you every joy there is in the world.... And things. Dawns and sunsets and poems and songs. Do you remember, Ruth, when we were talking in the hallway, waiting that night for the klansmen? Our transcendental possessive-ism?"

"Mm-hmm." Ruth nodded quite soberly. "Maybe that's what love is, a sort of thing. But no, it's not quite like that, either; not like sunrise and evening and a star or a bird. It's ... it's a new way of looking at things. And I've got it, Higgles. And what's more everybody on this blasted ship has it too."

"Has what?"

"Has that way of looking at things, silly. Everybody's in love. And Higgles, I don't want to see you get left."

Higbie gulped. "Infandum!" he muttered. "What makes you think everybody is in love?"

"Listen, moon!" ejaculated Ruth. "Say, Higgles, where did you learn your loving? All you've got to do is watch them. And I'd rather see you get her than any of the others."

"Get whom?" snapped Higbie. This was impinging intolerably on his nerves.

"Why, Flash, of course—Flash Potter. Do you know,

209

Higbie, I really wouldn't wonder if she might be my stepmother before long, the way papa is going. I'm beginning to understand things in myself that I always thought I had to thank mother for. The old devil! Don't you realize what tête-à-têtes he manages to arrange every evening? He doesn't recognize me yet and I don't suppose he wastes much time on you, but ... keep your eyes on him, Higgles!"

... Pudley! Pudley, courting Mrs. Potter—his Mrs. Potter!... Higbie was a cauldron of blind fury.

"And I don't want Amy to marry papa, Higgles. I like Amy and I want to be friends with her and if she marries him she'll be head of the Ladies' Aid inside of a year and then it'll be all up with her. And she's pretty much of a peach, I want you to know."

Higbie sternly controlled his feelings. "Ruth," he said, "I have observed myself a sort of ... a sort of leaning toward Mrs. Potter, but——"

"Leaning!" Ruth laughed derisively. "Higgles, it's not a leaning, it's a landslide; and I don't think Amy's going to manage to keep from under very much longer."

"But it's shameful!" Higbie grinned. "To think of men thus hounding a woman so recently widowed, a pure-minded, modest, spiritually refined woman of her age! It must be terribly distressing to her. Why, just now she was asking my advice about a memorial——"

Ruth tossed her head. "Amy seems to be bearing up under the strain pretty well. I rather imagine she likes it."

This remark struck Higbie speechless and for a dozen

210

paces he cogitated the matter in silence. How complicated human affairs do get! It was not at all on the program of his intentions that he should come grimacing amorously around Mrs. Potter ... gentle Mrs. Potter! ... with flattery and beguilement. It was unthinkable; and it was particularly unthinkable because he must preface his proposition to her with the statement that now he could no longer afford to pay her wages as his housekeeper. After that, how could he slump to his knees with passionate protestations?

Violently Higbie bolted the subject. "Ruth, I'm going to sell my house," he blurted. It was an heroic decision, he knew, thus to lop off this last large chunk of his past; it left him nothing of what had been his, of what had been he indeed, save a headful of verbs and verses in a dead language. But

had it not been rather the sharp blade of destiny that swings without glinting which had lopped him off from the trunk of his years and would graft him elsewhere? "I'm going to sell my house ... and I think I shall go someplace and open a second-hand bookstore. You know, I can't return to live in Baltimore now, after those scandalous articles in the papers. I can't get any other professorship; and besides ... I think I wouldn't want to resume that. I think I'm spoiled for that sort of life." Higbie smiled a little and Ruth, more composed after the first shock of his declaration, repaid him a flash of lips and eyes. "And I'd been thinking, Ruth, that I might invite Mrs. Potter to ... to become my partner."

"Higgles!" Ruth stared, and then went rollicking off

211

in a gale of laughter, so that it was quite some time before she could say another word. "But Higgles ... Amy in a bookstore?"

"Why not?" Higbie flushed but held manfully to the defense of his proposition. "She would make a charming clerk, she'd sell everything ... and what matter would it make what she sold? I don't see your point, Ruth."

Far out on the bay Ruth flicked the stub of her cigarette. "Higbie Chaffinch, listen to me. I haven't been kissed for an hour almost, and there's my lover going by and I'm after him.... Just look, Higgles, isn't he handsome! O, Higgles, darling!... But see here, young man. You forget your bookstore for a while and think of Amy and go get her. Because if you don't Weemsy will, and if Weemsy doesn't papa will ... and God knows, if nobody does Amy'll desert the ship. The fate of the buccaneers is in your hands. En avant!"

She was gone ... she was over there arm in arm with Kendrick ... she was kissing him a rantipole pirate kiss with a gusty hug and a wink at Higbie over his shoulder. ... And Higbie stood still where she had left him for more than many a minute, and could have supported a wide sail in a sturdy breeze as well as any mast.

IV

BUT those beans! Had Mrs. Potter fallen into them and been cooked up in the porridge? Higbie strolled again to

212

the companionway and looked down. Still in the galley was Pudley, but he was alone now and from the rattle and crash of the dishes he seemed to be irked at his loneliness. At the table in the main cabin was Mrs. Potter, and at the same table, Higbie saw through clouds of fire, was Weems, and they were working out a cross-word puzzle together, apparently much diverted by it. ... Higbie paced the deck.

Mrs. Potter was so human. And obviously to boot she was so ... so alluring in a sense. He had felt that himself, over and over again. He had felt it when first he saw Mrs. Potter that June midday behind his house, in the yellow gown, with the rose in her hand. He had felt it the night of the banquet at Walbrook when she came downstairs in the red gown, so Corinthian a contrast with her rich black hair! But he had some respect for her, he had not sought to force blissom attentions on her, he had not hunted her! And that was precisely what these others were doing ... Weems, and the renegade Pudley, and yes, beyond all doubt, the traitor Moggs.

From the night of that same banquet Moggs had plied her with blandishments; his salutation had been indeed beyond the proprieties, Higbie considered in retrospect. Moggs, with his hypocritical pretensions of love for Clarissa! It was dastardly!

Then Pudley, with all his hair-shirt prating and psalmodizing and klansmanship, had entered the lecherous competition. All the fury kindled in Higbie's spirit when

213

he came back to the schooner after the trial and heard that duet drifting out from between decks blazed now into new fire. So Pudley was arranging surreptitious trysts with her, was he? He had better look out ... and Higbie's small fists clenched fiercely ... or he would get another treatment such as he got the night of the raid!

And now came Weems! It was Weems's entrance into the contest that had brought the situation out of chaos, Higbie realized, looking back over the last forty-eight hours. At the very dinner of his induction into the pirate crew Weems had started his burlesque gallantries. The conversation had developed into a palpable rivalry between him and Moggs as to which could utter the most egregious flattery, with Pudley putting in a frantic phrase from time to time. And her reply to such sallies was always, quite indeliberately of course, so good-humored that crass men took it for archness and redoubled their eloquence.

Not hers the blame! Good, kindly, considerate Mrs. Potter, she was being victimized through her own unworldliness and freedom from suspicion. O, the vile smickering of men that obtrudes thus even upon the hallowed reticence of one so recently widowed, and so sorrowful over her loss! There was nothing lickish, edepol, in the proposition that he would lay before her. He would defend her from Pudley and Moggs and Weems, he would step between her and the satyrs! The valor of Captain Bloodeye flooded through him. He would show Amy what was a man!

214

V

It was well toward sunset before Higbie found an opportunity however to converse with Mrs. Potter alone, and then it was she that summoned him.

“Yoo-hoo, Dr. Chaffinch!” she called from forward. Still palpitating with the havoc Ruth’s counsels had wrought in him, still reverberating with echoes of her feminine wisdom, Higbie hurried to Mrs. Potter’s side.

“How do you like this one!” exclaimed the lovely Amy, radiant now with the triumph of successful quest. “It goes:

We watched him breathing through the night,

—only of course it was day with Herbie, we watched him breathing through the day and he didn’t die until evenin, but we can fix that part of it up all right and I like the moon in it, it’s right pretty; well, it goes:

We watched him breathing through the night—
His breathing soft and low,
As in his breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

And when the moon came, dim and sad,
And chilled with early dew,
His eyelids were forever closed
In death we knew.

He wore a crown of patience,
Through the years he struggled on,
Those hands that rest forever
Were the hands that made our home.

215

“That’s long enough and it’s right sad too and it reads all right.” Mrs. Potter glanced at Higbie and smiled yet again, with discernible elation. “Herbie did put up the woodshed anyways with his own hands and that’s jest what it was like when he was dyin, him heavin like waves.”

...“Amy...” murmured Higbie. “Amy, it is beautiful of course and I think it would make a very moving memorial. And ... do you feel terribly grief-stricken over him, Amy?”

“What, me, now?” Amy pondered a little upon the bright waves that slipped past the schooner. “Why,” she mused, “I do feel bad Dr. Chaffinch for I did like Herbie and I liked Walter too and Chissy, and I do get kinda sad now and then ... right sad a course. But here I am livin myself and I don’t think any one of them would want me to dress myself up in black and be cryin all day long while I got to keep on livin. Do you, Dr. Chaffinch? ... And I think I’ll go downstairs right now and copy this off on a sheet of paper and put it in an envelope so as if we should go coonin’ chickens again ...—a gleam flickered across her face— ”... or anythin I could mail it to the Chronicle so as it would get in the paper on time.”...

Higbie remained on deck ... and out of him from his two heels it seemed came a sigh all heaven must have looked around startled to hear, as of tides

pent and thunderheads tethered and the blind equinoxes themselves bogged
in their august precession.

Chapter Thirteen

I

FOR seven people two meals a day a minimum of twenty-eight fairly large potatoes is required. If the potatoes are small one cannot do with less than three to a plate, in particular when a powerful demand for them is assured by the fact they are to be transmuted in Mrs. Potter's aluminum alembics. And it contributed no little to Mrs. Potter's enjoyment of the cruise, as the *Mary Read* lunged every day nearer to Persimmons Cove, that never was the arduous peeling of so many potatoes left to her.

In the first place the job had fallen to Pudley and he had sliced grumblingly and with many malevolent mutterings at it. Moggs was first to offer to relieve him, couching his offer in terms which sounded almost imperative. By this time the minister was so eager in the service of Mrs. Potter that, when coerced to surrender the extra paring knife to Moggs, he retired to his forecastle and sulked the rest of the morning there. Then when, the day after he joined the pirate band, Weems was discovered bright and early with an apron knotted around his neck cheerfully staining his patrician fingers over the potato pan, the struggle for the knife became keen indeed.

217

Some explanation of that doubtless lay in the fact that all paring of potatoes and cleaning of carrots, all washing of dishes and scouring of pots, was performed under the immediate personal supervision of Mrs. Potter. In spite of her tolerance in many matters of more vital ethical and social significance, Mrs. Potter was severely dogmatic in regard to the kitchen and nothing outraged her more than mutilated potato or imperfectly scraped parsnip. There were two paring knives on the *Mary Read*. One of them Mrs. Potter retained for herself.

On the morning in question Pudley executed a manœuvre which ordinarily would have entitled him to the laurels in the first skirmish of the day, had it not been for a shrewd counter-offensive planned by Weems. For Pudley, excusing himself from the breakfast table on a pretense, hurried to the galley and emerged in ten minutes with the pan heaping with selected

potatoes of the smallest size and the two knives. With these he established himself far forward and scarcely able to contain his triumph waited for Mrs. Potter to join him. At this juncture however Weems pulled out with his foot from under the table, where even before breakfast was laid he had concealed it, a pan no less heaped with peas to be shucked—the last peas in the Mary Read’s pantry. Mrs. Potter glanced dubiously from the preacher, struck with surprise at the very peak of his gloating, to Weems, already busy with the green legumes. After all there was an abundance of potatoes....

“Some of these,” insinuated the crafty Weems, “are

218

all yellow, Mrs. Potter. Shall we use them just the same?”...

Pudley in mortal dudgeon bent alone over his potatoes.

II

NOW, of all the pirate band there were but two who did not join in the potato-peeling contest. One of these was Bull Glasby, who to be sure did not join in much of anything, being deeply absorbed in the study of the eyes of Boatswain Devildamn ... and fascinating green eyes they were, always rippling like pools from which a white oread has just slipped in fright. The other of these was Higbie. As a result of his reticence Higbie more often languished on the fringe of the golden circle than gloried in the center of it with Mrs. Potter. On this morning of Weems’s historic ruse however Higbie’s patience collapsed quite. He felt that if he did not soon find an opportunity to disclose his heart to Amy he would explode. So he did not yield to Weems and retire as he should have. Flushing but not to be browbeaten Higbie pulled his chair to Weems’s pan and picked up a pod.

“Lordy Lordy if the whole crew isn’t workin for the cook!” laughed Mrs. Potter. “Captain and all!” “But not cook!” Weems protested. “Ah, Mrs. Potter, it pains and embarrasses me to see a southern gentlewoman—a lovely southern gentlewoman—engaged in menial toil. Fore God, Mrs. Potter, it was not like this in the old days!”

219

“O, I don’t mind at all,” replied Amy blithely. “Really, I like to cook, leastways then I get things the way I want them, I never was able to get a

good square in hotels and the like of that.”

“Ah, but you would mind, Mrs. Potter, if you had servants who could relieve you, servants you could instruct to do as you wished.” Blinded by visions Weems tossed a handful of empty pods among the peas and leaned down to correct the error. A wild impulse to kick the whole pan into the face of this flatterer reared in Higbie but he bridled it. “How beautiful is a matron in charge of her household, lending to the work of her servants—merely by her gracious presence, Mrs. Potter! —the warmth and intimacy of the true home!”

... Higbie fumed ... and he wondered if he was green, as Sappho had been. Could he never get rid of the interloper? He had no flirtatious quiddle to bemuse Mrs. Potter with. His heart was swelling with tremendous matters of destiny!... “I don’t spose,” Mrs. Potter was saying, “I’d feel quite right hardly with a lot of servants, I couldn’t get used to them hardly, why I wouldn’t know what to do with myself.”

“Go driving, Mrs. Potter, in your car ... or...”

“Or maybe I’d have a radio and I could listen in,” suggested Mrs. Potter with a smile.

“Indeed you would be perfectly at ease!” Weems was exuberant. “Do you know, there is something about you ... sometimes I think it is your eyes and hair, and then again I fancy it is your voice, Mrs. Potter ... that

220

reminds me of my mother.” Weems heaved a reminiscent sigh. “Ah, but what a proud mistress of Chaptonk House she was, Mrs. Potter! And how barren the place has been since she was summoned to the eternal peace. For years now I have not had heart to set foot in the parlors where once she reigned, the very spirit of happiness! ... The doors locked, the shades drawn.”

“Seems queer to me you never married, Mr. Weems, a man like you.” Higbie observed that the dark eyes of Mrs. Potter flashed a merry glance from beneath her brows at the seigneur of Tulls Corner. He writhed with a sharp pang. How could such glittering insinuation help but turn her head? ... But Mrs. Potter sighed a little, thoughtfully. “Seems to me men wasn’t made to live alone Mr. Weems ... a man like you.”

“But don’t you understand? I am still waiting for the woman proud enough, beautiful enough, womanly enough to take my mother’s place! It

cannot be any woman. It must be the woman ... and if there are two of her in the world, then neither will do. There must be none like her!"

"Maybe," remarked Mrs. Potter studying the peas, "you'll have a long time to wait Mr. Weems for a lady like that."

"And maybe," murmured Weems leaning far forward in brash indifference to the presence of Higbie, "I am almost at the end of my waiting. Do you believe in dreams, Mrs. Potter? Last night I dreamed——"

"Aren't you," said Higbie, and the interruption was

221

caustic on the lips even that uttered it, "shucking any more peas, Robert?"

Weems laughed deprecatingly. "I beg your pardon! I completely forgot myself. I was thinking of the day when I shall at last unlock those forbidding doors and raise the shades and lead into those memoried parlors ... my bride! Ah, we shall be gay again at Chaptonk House, Mrs. Potter! We were all very gay one time, I daresay there were never more brilliant levees in all Maryland. The carriages with their sleek horses, the lofty chambers fairly dizzy with lights, the fiddlers discoursing sweet music in the conservatory, the lovely women and handsome men swaying through the stately waltz!"

"Do you like to dance, Mr. Weems?" Mrs. Potter was ebullient with delight. "Lordy, I could die dancin. I went to a masquerade ball down to the Maccabees last Crismas with Willie and Sue, I was Titania and there was a man there dressed up like the devil with a long tail with a point on it that he was always ticklin you with, Lordy I nearly died laughin!"

... Higbie stared across the shimmer of water. A panting little ferry was blustering through the waves at the rate of as much as four knots, a weatherbeaten old ferry with the name Francis Scott Key painted in peeling gold on her pilot house. Higbie remembered her from years ago; she came down the river from Washington and crossed to Princess Anne. He had traveled on her once, and one never forgot that trip because one was always the only passenger....

222

"There will be masquerade balls at Chaptonk House too, I promise you, Mrs. Potter. And ... I presume it will be impossible to keep the younger set from doing those modern dances. I understand they really are beautiful if danced with grace.... I should like to see you dance, Mrs. Potter. You are so

graceful, you know. Ah, no, I'm not paying you empty compliments! One needs only to see you walk, Mrs. Potter, to know that you would dance ... superbly!"

Mrs. Potter ... laughed until it wrung Higbie's spirit to hear such laughter. But where now was her sorrowing for Herbie? Indeed, this display of good spirits could be nothing but pretense, to conceal the agony within! How Weems's cruel raillery must torment her!...

"Gayer than ever before we shall be, Mrs. Potter Weems had abandoned even the least gesture now of shucking peas. "For we shall be richer than ever before! The treasure! Ah, but there will be no such house in all the Eastern Shore as ours, so gay and so brilliant!... And who knows but what in due course we shall be called ... to Annapolis, Mrs. Potter? Maryland has dire need now of a leader, a strong man who can lift her out of the mire of vulgar Yankee commercialism, who can point out to her the ancient goal and lead her forward among the commonwealths to a majestic destiny! ... I have heard the call, and with the help of my companion, fore God I shall answer it, Mrs. Potter!"

"Bah!" blurted the unhappy Higbie. "Don't listen to him, Mrs. Potter! It is ridiculous to think we will find as much as an old cigar box or the leavings from some

223

picnic party!" And Higbie leaped from his seat and there is no telling what vengeance he might have wrought on the head of his erstwhile pupil had there not come at that minute a scared cry from forward, where Ruth and Kendrick presumably were keeping watch and the Rev. Mr. Pudley was peeling.

"Port your helm, Pansy! For Christ's sake! The preacher's gone overboard!"

III

*I*t was too true. Beside the abandoned potato pan lay the preacher's stool on its side. Out there pressing through the waves with frantic overhand strokes was Pudley, and ... Yes, yes, now it was apparent. He was escaping, he was swimming in a mad effort to reach the little ferry. His shouts of appeal paralyzed the pirates with consternation.

“Help, help! Save me, I have been kidnaped! Help, murder! It is I, Cyril Pudley! Save me from this bedlam ship!”

“O for crying out loud!” gasped Ruth. “We can’t let him go! Devil damn me, he’ll have us all in the hoosegow! Ahoy, there, ferry!” Ruth snatched the bandanna from her head and flagged it desperately. “Ahoy! Keep your hands off that man! He’s a ... he’s cracked! Belay there

Considerable excitement was to be remarked on board the Francis Scott Key. She had crossed the Mary Read’s wake by now and at first it seemed she would

224

ignore the swimmer, for she held to her course while Pudley lunged clamoring after her through the waves. From the pilot house a bearded skipper could be seen peering back at the Mary Read through his binoculars; and his agitation as he handed them to his mate and took the wheel were eloquent of immense shock. On the lower deck too confusion seemed badly confounded. At every third port a face protruded searching the decks of the schooner with curiosity not untempered, it was evident, with alarm.

“Come about, men!” roared the master of the Mary Read, spinning the wheel. “We’ll have to get him. We can’t let him drown ... and we can’t let him tell his story.”

Higbie dodged as the boom swung over his head. There was a spanking breeze and the Mary Read with all sails set could make as much as five knots. And now the good ship, heeling with the wind, quivered gradually into full speed after the fugitive. Too late! Even as the schooner gathered way the ferry circling came between the swimming figure and the pursuers, and when she had gone on the water where he had been floundering was empty. They were pulling Pudley in over the rail. And the Francis Scott Key, smoke belching from her tall funnel, fled northward up the Chesapeake.

“Ah ... ha ... ha!” exclaimed Moggs. “She is running away! Why, how preposterous! She is leaving her course! She is heading for Baltimore! Hmm-m-m-m

She was indeed abandoning her course. Cut off from

225

the Potomac by the pirates on her quarter, cut off from Princess Anne on the southwest likewise, the ferry was in full flight northward. And what even now was Pudley telling the affrighted skipper, what lurid chronicle of capture and abduction and orgy and hideous deeds on board the pirate? No, there was no turning back now. She must be halted, boarded if need be. Pudley must be retrieved or the entire Atlantic fleet would be sweeping the Chesapeake for the buccaneers.

“Ahoy!” shouted Captain Bloodeye shaking a frantic fist at the quarry. “Heave to, there! Heus!”

“Lordy Lordy jest to think of that now Dr. Chaffinch! Do you think we can catch ‘em and what’ll we do if we do catch ‘em?” Mrs. Potter regarded the military chief of the pirate band with eyes that shone.

And in the bosom of Captain Bloodeye swirled a tumultuous joy. Now indeed would Mrs. Potter see a man! Let Pudley join her in duets, let Moggs temp; her with extravagant adulation, let Weems dangle before her the promise of ball-room and carriage and Chaptonk House! Not such as these was he! Conqueror of the Walbrook klan, hero of the raid on Tulls Corner, he, Captain Bloodeye, would show her deeds of valor!

“Rest assured, my dear Mrs. Potter!” said Higbie. “We will get Pudley or...”—and Higbie banged a small fist on the table until it hurt him exceedingly— “...die in the attempt!”

Like an Olympian ecphoneme upon this bold avowal came a thunderclap from forward that arrested Higbie’s pulse for a round minute. And he perceived from where

226

he stood petrified what certainly seemed a small cannonball go ricochetting across the churning water, hop indeed up over the taffrail of the ferry, bounce down the passageway between cabin and railing, and carom finally with a clatter of broken glass into a window. Simultaneously there was a howl of fright from within and out of an adjacent door popped the white-clad figure of the ship’s cook. One look he took aft at the pirate schooner and then he was off, skidding into another door and out of sight.

“Whee!” Ruth was shrilling at the bow. “Hands up, skipper, you old grampus! Chuck papa overboard!”

Higbie rushed to her side. “What have you done?” he demanded.

“It’s the cannon!” yelled Ruth, jumping with glee. “This funny little cannon! I didn’t know it was loaded! I just pulled something and bang, off

she went! Let's get some more powder!"

Higbie glanced astounded at Kendrick but that young man was pale as he. "I didn't know it either," he protested. "I bought the thing at a second-hand store. God almighty, I hope the old tub doesn't sink."

And the hunt continued.

It was nip and tuck. If anything the schooner had gained a few yards in the last half hour on the ferry which was slow to recover momentum after drawing up to rescue Pudley. The cannon shot seemed to have no effect other than to stimulate the Francis Scott Key to one last incredible effort, and as the chase sped at nearly six knots up the bay she trained all she had lost. It

227

seemed that she surely must break in two, so far did she bend amidships with every plunge of her straining, shivering walking-beam.

A skipper whose maritime career has been spent exclusively on the run between Washington and Princess Anne—albeit it has been exclusively also on the grandfatherly Francis Scott Key, whose every coign and eccentricity he knew and which he could have navigated blindfold—cannot be expected to be familiar with the upper reaches of the broad shallow Chesapeake. Naval boards of enquiry would have had nothing but commendation for gallant Captain Bowens after even the most severe investigation as to how, at this critical moment, his vessel came to shove her nose deep into a sandbar and stop, her funnel tottering, delivered into the pirates' hands.

Aboard the Mary Read there was pandemonium at this unexpected intervention of Providence. Above Devildamn's jubilant shrieks and Flash Potter's ululation it was hardly possible to hear the stentorian command of Captain Bloodeye: "Ready to board her, men! We've got to get the preacher!" ... Higbie turned an eye upon Amy to observe the effect. She was certainly impressed this time! Macte!

And now they were drawing nigh, and now Captain Bloodeye poised perilously on the rail, prepared to be the first of the buccaneers to battle. Down went the helm where Kendrick had relieved Pansy Moggs, around came the faithful schooner. A beautiful manœuver! Higbie could almost touch the side of the ferry with his hand outstretched. "Euax!" he shouted. And just then

228

happened a contingency that Captain Bloodeye, had he been more of a mariner and less inflamed with the lust of conflict, would have prepared for. For once again the boom swung massively to leeward, and it caught Higbie from behind, and the chieftain of the pirate crew found himself catapulting through the air, tumbling head over heels through a door, and sprawling at last on the Francis Scott Key in the passage just outside the Grand Saloon. The Mary Read, cables dragging vainly in the water, bumped into the stout ribs of the ferry, sheered off and was gone.

IV

HIGBIE picked himself up appalled. He was indeed alone and his enemies were all about him. Visions of Pudley's mocking triumphant laughter as they fell upon him and beat him down and bound him with chains filled him with despair. *Perii pertimui!* But he would die fighting! Out of their sash he pulled the pair of colonial pistols with which he had armed himself as the chase proceeded. The sound of running came to his ears and he turned, in time to witness the abrupt entry of the white-habited gentleman who, half an hour before, had surrendered his kitchen to the cannon-ball.

"Wow!" shouted Captain Bloodeye waving his pistols. "Out of my way, you, there! Euax!"

The chef did not pause. Out once more on deck he scuttled and Higbie pulsing with delirium took after him. Around by the bow they sped, howl of terror answering

229

to roar of imprecation. Casting a desperate glance out on the bay Higbie rejoiced to see that the Mary Read, once more under way, was coming about to his rescue.... And now there were two that fled. The engineer, putting his head quizzically out of the engine room just as the electrified cook darted shrieking by, looked once at the frightful figure pursuing him and then was off. And now back into the Grand Saloon sped the hunting, and up the stairs, and out once more on deck. As they careened around the pilot house Higbie glimpsed three pairs of eyes peering horrified at him over a window sill; and as aft they scurried on the windward side Higbie saw with leaping heart that the Mary Read was close by. There on the rail was Moggs, the hooks once more in his hand to grapple with the ferry; and there beside him was Ruth, giving Higbie an encouraging hail and wave of

her rusty cutlass; and there was Weems, now for the first time to prove his metal as a member of the buccaneer band and eager for the fray; and there was Amy ... lovely, loyal Amy!... wigwagging inspiration with her white kerchief.... On the second circuit of the upper deck cook and engineer dove into the pilot-house and Higbie pulled up with his most blood-curdling shout at the door.

“Wow!” he roared. “Hold up your hands, all of you! Euax!”

The crew of the Francis Scott Key needed no urging. They huddled in a shivering cluster at the far side of the little room, and five pairs of hands, including the large

230

gaunt ones of Cyril Pudley, wavered weakly toward the blind heavens.

And from below ... ah glory! ah Captain Bloodeye! ... came the posting of the pirates to the aid of their chief!

“Dr. Chaffinch!” protested the Rev. Mr. Pudley, dripping profusely after his immersion, “Dr. Chaffinch, I cannot believe you are going to shoot!”

“Captain Bloodeye!” corrected Higbie with a scowl. During the last few days Fate had stoked high his wrath. This was the man who had denounced him so witheringly from the banks of the Luminous Water, that Sunday morning in the Marvellous Vale! This was the man who had led the klansmen in shameful assault on the house at Walbrook! This was the man who even now was deep in clandestine intrigues with Mrs. Potter! Higbie found himself hopping. “If I shot now,” he girmed, “it might be a mercy, you, Pudley! If I shot now...”

But Ruth was there.

V

“*WHO’S* the captain of this wormy old tub?” demanded Ruth.

Shivering the skipper admitted his identity ... as Moggs brandishing dirk and pistol ranged himself with. Captain Bloodeye and Devildamn.

“Well, sir, we want that preacher with the hangdog look,” Ruth continued.

231

Four sets of round mariners’ eyes turned inhospitably upon Pudley. “I don’t want him,” asserted Captain Bowens with emphasis. “I jest picked

him up sort of ... sort of to keep him from drownin.... They want you,” he added favoring the minister with a chilling glance.

Once did the Rev. Mr. Pudley gaze appealingly into the stern faces of his saviours ... even as Weems, panting hard after such unwonted exertion, arrived belatedly at the scene ... but not a gleam of welcome shone in any eye. And once did he gaze despairingly on the bay that frolicked in the noonday sun and on the distant verdure that was Maryland and liberty; but it was too far to swim, too high to dive, to attain that sanctuary. With a groan he yielded himself.

“And that’s about all, I believe,” said Captain Bloodeye. “I’m ... I’m sorry we had to chase you so far out of your course.”

“Only you ought to have stopped when we told you to,” added Ruth with a swagger. “Did you think we were just pretending?”

Under the ruddy Poseidon’s beard of Captain Bowens a slight twitch might have been observed at the corners of his mouth. “Well, now, I didn’t think you was jest exactly pretendin, not exactly. Can I take in some sail now? gets kinda tiresome holdin em up like this. Thankee.... An no, I didn’t exactly think you was pretendin, fact is I didn’t know jest what to think, after that story in the papers.”

“I beg your pardon?” stammered Higbie.

232

”Why, that there story in the papers. Ain’t you seen the papers? Willie...” —and the engineer stepped forward—“...go down to the saloon an get that copy of the Chronicle we was readin. If you don’t mind, Cap’n?”

Higbie nodded permission and the engineer, with one last sour look at the terror, hurried away.

“An meanwhile I do be right smart out of my course,” continued Captain Bowens, “an hard aground as ever I been in my life, an I wouldn’t think unkindly of you if you was to give me a lift now. Especially after you put a cannon-ball into my galley an spilled the soup all over.”

With an exchange of dubious glances the buccaneers conferred. Then, “Ah ... ha ... ha!” said Moggs, causing the ship’s cook a spasm with every guffaw. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do, Captain. As you may have observed, we are having a most enjoyable little ... er ... masquerade down the bay; and that man there, the one you picked up, is a trifle ... careless on occasion. Hm-m-m-m-m?” Captain Bowens scrutinized the sopping Mr.

Pudley and nodded significantly at Moggs. “Now, we will be glad to help you free, if ... you think you can forget this entire episode. What do you say, Captain?”

It was all right with Captain Bowens, and the pirates —pocketing the latest copy of the Chronicle, after a hasty glimpse of the screaming headlines, and herding the abject Pudley before them—retired to the Mary Read. At a speed of six knots a flat bow will not thrust very deeply into a sandbar. It was a tug of but a few minutes

233

ere the Francis Scott Key, churning up the mud with her weary old paddles while the Mary Read strained sturdily on the cable, lurched into deep water. At the last moment Mrs. Potter came scrambling up from the cabin with her envelope for the Chronicle, containing a somewhat awkwardly emended version of the memorial for Herbie, and tossed it aboard the ferry to be mailed. From the pilot house Captain Bowens, considerably mollified, even venting a chuckle at intervals, waved farewell as he headed down the bay to familiar waters.

And at last the pirates all, excepting Pudley who had retired into his forecastle with a thumping attack of the megrims, gathered in solemn conclave over the Chronicle.

VI

AS for this journal and what it contained, Higbie, proud of his share in the capture of the Francis Scott Key, struttingly conscious of Mrs. Potter’s admiring eyes upon him, could not but be amused. It was a wild story, to be sure. But was not he, Dr. Higbie Chaffinch, and were not all they, Amy and Moggs and Ruth and Kendrick, already thoroughly ruined by stories no less wild which had previously appeared? The bewilderment of Weems who now for the first time saw himself published to the world ... the blissom idiot! ... in connection with the notorious Baltimore fugitives added much to Higbie’s amusement. It served him right for his intrusion, Higbie reflected, and he laughed the more heartily at the magistrate’s discomfiture.

234

It was an extraordinary story. Back on page one the affair had won its way, from the lesser salience of an inside page whither the crush of national

affairs had jostled it when the search for the fugitives began to lag. It had earned new eight-column headline distinction too, and not the least gratifying feature of that to Higbie was the prominence given to himself. He noted Amy's quick glance of surprise when she scanned it ... and he lengthened his stride and affected a broad seafaring roll. She would find out who was the man of them all, on board the Mary Read!...

CHAFFINCH HEADS PIRATES ON CHESAPEAKE

Higbie confronted the imposing piled caption and chuckled with glee as he imagined how it must have dumfounded Walbrook. It covered with many accretions of fantastic detail of rapine and assault the foraging expedition into the gardens of Tulls Corner, and it went even farther to intimate that the rovers of the Mary Read might have been responsible for a whole week of untoward incidents in neighboring hamlets and townships: the blasting of the safe in the Princess Anne bank, the theft of three cows from a Tilghman Island herd, the plundering of a Cambridge garage and the mischievous burning of a harbor shop at Blackwater:

BALTIMORE FUGITIVES FLY JOLLY ROGER, TERRORIZE EASTERN SHORE VILLAGES

235

Then, the story went on, after their arrest by the heroic Constable Lammister of Tulls Corner and arraignment in court there, the pirates were identified by Judge Weems. It was unquestionably in an effort to prevent him from spreading the information that they lured him on board their schooner. Search for Judge Weems's body up and down the shores of the Chaptonk failed to reveal any trace of him. The only plausible surmise was that he was held, probably in irons:

Hopkins Professor, Missing After Pagan Bacchanalia on Walbrook Estate, Identified with Companions in Tulls Corner Raid.

“Ah ... ha ... ha! What is this about a charter? We should have had a charter, of course; all the best pirates had charters, and Ned Lowe did declare war on all the world. But we really omitted to do so.” Moggs put his long finger on the source of his amusement:

**Evangelist Pudley, Judge Weems Detained
in Chains on Buccaneer Schooner;
Pirates' Charter Declares
War on Entire World.**

...“Well, well, well,” murmured Ruth with that same caustic inflection with which she had challenged Kendrick when they were marvelling over the first newspaper accounts of the cruise. “You seem to be quite proud of your literary handiwork, Kendrick. Couldn’t you just help rushing into print Kendrick bounded to his feet. “This is the second

236

time I’ve been accused of writing these stories for the Chronicle. I don’t think it’s fair. If I were going to write any I’d make them true ones, wouldn’t I? I wouldn’t put in such silly stuff as that about a charter. If you read on you’ll find that we are supposed to have signed the document each in his own blood; that we are said to have agreed that every man who refuses to join us shall be tied up and buried on a desert strand, with just his head sticking out of the sand, to broil or parch or starve to death. Does that sound as if I wrote the story?”

“Whoever wrote it,” muttered Weems, “fore God it’s an outrage! Now how will I ever be able to face the electorate? Buccaneer Weems for Governor, they’ll sneer! Lil be a laughing stock! And I suppose there will be more articles and each of them worse than its predecessor!”

“Indeed they will be worse,” insisted Kendrick. “They’ll be just as bad as the dime-novel imagination of a rewrite man can make them, and ... I wish you people would put me ashore right now or get over the notion I’m betraying you.”

Vigorously did Moggs rise to the defense of his protege, explaining how many a time Kendrick had explained to him the nefarious inmost processes of faking sensation in newspaper work. Weems, though somewhat subdued, concurred that the evidence of this particular story quite exonerated

Kendrick, who most certainly would not have overlooked the feature of the buried treasure at Persimmons Cove had he been corresponding.

237

To their arguments Higbie contributed a laugh. "Nugæ! What difference does this article make? We were suspected of being bootleggers. Now we are proclaimed pirates. We were ruined anyway ... and really, I feel quite exhilarated at the thought. At Walbrook all that lay before me was the past. Here ... on this blue bay, in this good ship ... I have nothing but a new future. How very delightful

Mrs. Potter made one in the applause, but something was the matter with Ruth. She bit her lip and looked away. She had gone ... gray, somehow. A little chill fastened upon Higbie.

VII

QUITE late that night, as the Mary Read lay at anchor close in to the wooded shore, Moggs lingered on the deck alone, for after the frenzy of the day a pale melancholy suffused him and he searched the skies and found there the steadfast star named Clarissa. But from the forecabin where the Rev. Mr. Pudley repined there came a disconsolate moan, and Moggs, feeling suddenly a rush of compunction, let himself down into the darkness of that small cabin.... One must be suffering torment to make such a desperate attempt to escape as had the minister.

"Mr. Pudley!" whispered Moggs. "Mr. Pudley?..."

"Who is it?" challenged a hoarse voice. "Who is it come to mock me?"

238

"It is I ... Hiltonshurley Moggs ... and I am not coming to mock you, Mr. Pudley. I heard ... I thought I heard you sigh, and I wondered if you were ill. Is there anything I can do for you? Hm-m-mm-m?"

"I am very wretched, Mr. Moggs.... But no, you had better leave me. I am very wretched, but it is a spiritual anguish and not a physical and I cannot readily see how you can help me.... I am a very lonely man, Mr. Moggs."

A new qualm in his heart, which was not after all a heart that should hang without some extenuation being urged, Moggs groped his way to the unoccupied berth across the forecabin from that on which the parson

tossed, and sat down. "I too am a very lonely man, Mr. Pudley," he confessed. "Ah ... ha ... ha! I have been lonely all my life, and tonight for some reason after the others had retired my loneliness became a pang. So I was walking the deck and seeking that peace which I have found at times in the heavens, when I overheard you."

"There is peace indeed in the heavens, Mr. Moggs." The voice of Pudley quavered faintly, and now that there was in it neither the asperity of scorn nor the snarl of rancor Moggs found it to be quite gentle and pitiful. "There is the bosom of Abraham in the heavens, and shining there ... is my bride, Mr. Moggs; Ruth's mother. She died when the child was but an infant."

"And up there perhaps ... for I am not a man of unshaken faith, Mr. Pudley, I have doubted often ...

239

is a slender white spirit too who was ... who is Clarissa."

"And this morning ... Ah, Mr. Moggs, I should have drowned! How eagerly this minute would I accept death, that would unite me again with my Ruth, and leave behind me here on earth the shameful temptations of the flesh! ... For I have not always been so constant in every thought, Mr. Moggs, as I should have been. Let me confess to you, Mr. Moggs! I have had sinful and incontinent desires, even on board this mad vessel I have been tempted, and I am torn with repentance. ... It was from them I fled this morning, Mr. Moggs. I was mad."...

In the darkness Moggs sensed that the preacher had half risen in his eagerness and stared painfully across the cabin; and Moggs swallowed a clutch in his throat and extended a hand to that other berth and felt it grasped by Pudley's hand, bony and quivering.

"Is any of us without sin?" he murmured. "I too have ... erred, and repented. But I should think, Mr. Pudley, it would be easier not to err if one were ... if one had been truly wedded. Clarissa and I..."

"You were never married?"

"She was taken away from me so early. Perhaps it was better so; our ... companionship was so white, so clear, so ... like an April dawn. But now ... Do you think, Mr. Pudley, would it be good theology to believe that a marriage now ... would have some little validity? In ... whatever is to come?"

240

VIII

FOR once this night on the Mary Read sleep had her way. The manifold excitements of the day and the exhaustion that followed them betrayed the buccaneers Captain and crew into her hands completely, and the dulcisonance of slumbrous breathing soughed in every cabin as the schooner rocked on cradling waves.

There was none awake at midnight when two men stood together at the bow bareheaded beneath the unchanging dim star that was named Clarissa: none to hear what the Rev. Mr. Pudley repeated, with a reverence such as had never come to him with all the odor of orange blossoms and purple diapason of the organ; and none to hear the response of Moggs as he took for his bride a memory and a dream.

Chapter Fourteen

I

IT reminded Higbie, the way he felt, of those last few weeks of his undergraduate life when he awaited too impatient to sleep the coming of commencement. Was he a lad then, eager to chivy the fates, to grasp and bridle and break them to his desires? Higbie laughed gustily at the thought. By the same token lad he was now. He panted with impatience, his head bulged with visions, he would toss hours in his berth agog before he could sleep; and yet in spite of all this he found himself every morning with keener zest and energy more abounding. Now at last he was utterly free. The magic of the Marvellous Vale was a true magic. The dusty, constrained, unreal, sober past was an ended act, and the curtain was even now rising ... this time on a future fresh, enfranchised, genuine ... drunk!

Gray with rain dawned the morning after the capture of the Francis Scott Key, little stinging squalls harried tatters of scud low through the sky, choppy waves shattered against the bows of the Mary Read and drenched the deck with spume. Moggs and Kendrick, relieving each other at the wheel, navigated in oil-skins; and the

242

schooner close-reefed bashed her way obstinately southward.

Joining his friend out there from time to time Higbie heard the story of what had happened between him and Pudley at midnight. Higbie was immensely amused at this noctuary. So Moggs believed that absurd explanation of the parson's plunge into the bay! He, Higbie, knew full well that Pudley had gone overboard for just one reason, and it was abundant; he was maddened with chagrin at Higbie's triumphant advance on the warm citadel of Amy Potter's affections. But Higbie promised Moggs that he would treat the minister at least without outward indication of malice or derision. And although he could hardly repress his mirth at times he did force himself to recognize Pudley with a semblance of cordiality.... The bald impostor! He'd know better next time than try clandestine trysts!

And now and then Ruth would come out on deck for a mouthful of the wet air. Her attitude had changed as violently as had her father's. She had

lost color and that naiadine élan had wilted over night. Her smile was ... pinched and her response cynical.

“But what’s happened to Kendrick?” Higbie inquired half curious, half dreading as they stood together in the bow and let the spray from the broken hissing waves spatter upon their slickers.

Ruth regarded him quizzically. “I don’t know ... he’s grouching around somewhere.” She made a face. “I suppose he’ll be composing another epistle to Nemo. I should worry.... But Higgles, lamb, tell me some

243

more about your old bookstore. Do you want a sober, industrious, misanthropist old maid for a clerk? Because I’m looking for a job.”

Not another more revealing word could Higbie wheedle or pry from her. It was obvious something had come between the two. That was particularly manifest when the whole company were gathered in the main cabin, when Ruth would dawdle in one end of the room and Kendrick mope at the other. Higbie fretted about it ... but even the most affectionate of couples quarrel on occasion; it was not every one could be as mild and complacent as he, Higbie meditated, had ever been during Minnie’s periodic fits of petulance. They would make it up tomorrow or the next day. Meanwhile Higbie had worries of his own.

Chief among these was Weems. For, if Moggs and Pudley had unaccountably withdrawn their suits ... O, unaccountably indeed, Higbie chuckled to himself; why couldn’t they acknowledge candidly their defeat?... Weems all the more exigently urged his upon Mrs. Potter. It must needs be subtle courtship that day of showers and chill, for in the small cabin of the Mary Read there was no opportunity for anyone to establish himself tête-à-tête with Amy, but there was no misreading the purpose of Weems’s attentions. Sopping and dejected the afternoon dragged on to a drizzling dusk, and the Mary Read hove to in the lee of a woodsy point.

Dinner was an amazing tour de force for Amy. The potted meats and canned vegetables which were all that remained in the schooner’s lockers she seasoned with

244

magic, stewed in a witch’s caldron; and she served in the end, after discovering a last bottle of Minnie Chaffinches wine, vintage of 1892, which she had hoarded against just such an emergency, a veritable feast.

Rain swished across the deck in sheets, the hull of the *Mary Read* quivered before the shock of the little exacerbated waves that drove against her in squadrons; but between decks under the heavy iron-bound lamp all was snug and comfortable.

There was much talk over the coffee of treasure trove, for in two days with favorable winds they should be at Persimmons Cove. Moggs expatiated at length in the genial inspiration of wine and food and warmth out of the rain on just what sort of permanent endowed home he would build, with his share of the gold, for the Foundation, until Ruth tripped him up with the reminder that the Foundation was ruined and he was ruined and they all were ruined by the articles in the papers, and that he might better plan what sort of mausoleum he would erect for his own unrevered bones. From this gin Moggs extracted himself with good grace and triple guffaw, and jovially he began to rehearse possibilities of a trip around the world. Higbie became quite interested in these speculations and wished Moggs godspeed and expressed the most lively regret that he would be unable to go along. Then presently Weems—with his share of the gold—began to redecorate Chaptonk House and to plot his gubernatorial campaign, quitting the ballroom for wheeling political tours of the state, but hastening always anxiously home to the bosom of the proud and

245

beautiful dame who should eventually take his mother's place. Weems's fantasia was punctuated with languishing glances at Amy which began to irk Higbie exceedingly.

"But you say yourself, Robert, that your ancestors hunted for the treasure, and one of them came home ... ah!... drunk and the others without a penny," Higbie sneered.

"I said," Weems corrected, "that Thomas Snyghe, my maternal granduncle, returned from his expedition with a hideous story of pirate ghosts; and that my own grandfather, Alfred Robert Caton Willoughby Weems, took but a casual glance at the dune which covers the buried chest and weakly abandoned the project."

"Nugæ!" Higbie smiled, and lifting his glass held it tilted until a final ruby driblet rolled into his mouth. "We at least shall not return drunk, for I believe that is the last bottle of wine. Isn't it, Amy?"

This rejoinder was not a popular one and plunged the company for a few minutes into fermenting taciturnity, albeit his mischief gave Higbie great

inward glee. Presently Moggs tactfully navigated conversation away from treasure trove and into channels of ghostly legend, and spook stories were exchanged until Amy begged respite. Then Pudley ... and certainly, Higbie reflected, he acted the role he had assumed before Moggs with consummate skill, smiling appreciatively and taking part with unexpected humor and verve in the conversation ... lifted his voice with Amy's; and the evening ended

246

with a program of old favorites from Suwanee River to The Last Rose of Summer.

...But before he could retire Higbie must needs take a turn about the deck, too wild with joy of his new jocund exuviation to confine himself in a narrow berth. There in a surly huddle of oilskins he found Kendrick and tried to entice the youth into confidences, but got so tart a reply that he went his way with a shrug.

Ruth was quite right, Kendrick was in a frightful grouch; and Ruth herself was in a seizure of megrims; and ... well, there was nobody quite so gay on board as he, he laughed, or quite so young! Sweet rain, sweet night, sweet life ... and thrice-sweet Amy!...

II

"AH, but Amy!" exclaimed Higbie, cornering the lovely one at last the next day ... a day to make men shout for nothing but luxuriance of sun and tempering washed coolness of the breeze ... after much strategic marching and countermarching against Weems. "How blithe am I these lyric mornings! Do they talk of rejuvenation? I was old at half my age, and I have found the remedy. Set torches to the circumstance, sweep the mind clean for new tenants. Go pirating down the Chesapeake ... with Flash Potter!"

She put her head back and laughed archly. "Goodness Higbie if you aren't the funniest man I ever see! I guess nobody wouldn't call you old if they'd of watched

247

you chasin all those men around the ferry, I was so scared at first I thought I'd scream, and then when I see you chasin em it looked so comical I nearly

bust laughin. Lordy Lordy to think of you chasin all those men around!”

Together they showered the morning with cachinnation.

“Never in all my life have I had so much fun!” Higbie protested. “But this whole trip has been fun, it’s been fun ever since you came to Walbrook. Do you remember the dinner? And Moggs balancing that hair on his nose? Good old Moggs! And Kendrick bawling that scurrilous chantey?... But what can have happened to Ruth and Kendrick?” Higbie added as he observed Ruth incongruously alone, flat on her back on the companion, lost in the luminous skies. “They were so very much in love ... so beautiful in their love.”

Amy frowned dubiously too and shook her head. “Yes indeedy they were right pretty together, weren’t they, and I always kinda hoped they’d get married and maybe they will some day, and I can’t for the life of me make out jest what’s happened but there does seem sompmhm gone wrong, don’t there Higbie?”

“There is indeed, and it gives me very great pain; because I think, Amy,” declared Higbie, “that I am more fond of that rare child, that exquisite mingling of tenderness and caprice, than I am of ... of my own daughter. It is she too who is responsible for all the jubilance that fills me now, for it was she induced me to advertise and ... that brought us together, Amy.”

Mrs. Potter deliberated. “They used to go rowin together

248

in the evenin in that rowboat when we was anchored for the night, remember how you could hear em singin out across the water? Lordy but it brought the tears to my eyes sometimes jest to listen to em, and here they are pizen to each other.”

“It is tragic; or it would be tragic if they were not to make friends ever again. But I do feel it will turn out happily, don’t you, Amy?” Higbie took this opportunity, without venturing to meet his companion eye to eye, to press a little with his elbow to his side the hand Mrs. Potter had placed in his arm. His spirit was prancing.

“I’ll tell you what I think Higbie, I think that one of them fine nights when he had her out in that rowboat Kendrick should of rowed jest as fast as he was able right in to shore and took her by the arm and hustled off to the nearest minister and got married, that’s what I think Higbie!”

“You mean ... abduct her?” Higbie stammered in surprise.

“You can call it what you please, I mean he should of hurried Ruth off to the nearest minister and got married because he could of had her if he’d of had spunk enough to take her, that’s what I mean.” So vehemently did Mrs. Potter define her contention that the blood tided into her cheeks and Higbie marvelling reflected that he had never seen even madcap Ruth more vivacious.

But he was completely astounded by this barbaric proposal. “Why, Ruth didn’t want to leave us! She’s been the most enthusiastic of us all, from the very start!

249

It was she, you know, who quite insisted on bringing that ... on bringing Weems along with his stupid map.”

Mrs. Potter twinkled amusedly upon Higbie. “Let me tell you sompmhm Higbie, Kendrick hasn’t been happy for a week now and I know why, because he come to me and let on he wasn’t happy, and Ruth’s been restless for a week now and I know it because she’s a woman and so’m I and prhaps I can see things a man can’t see; and the reason Kendrick’s unhappy is because he’s in love with Ruth and he’s sour on the whole blamed pirate cruise, and the reason Ruth’s unhappy is because he don’t take her away and marry her.”

“But I don’t quite understand. If she wanted to go ashore and marry him _____”

“No I don’t spose you do understand Higbie, nor Kendrick neither he don’t understand, but jest the same a girl ... Well, it’s right funny about girls, you can’t let em jest do what they want to because if they love you they’ll go ahead and do sompmhm they don’t want to do jest to be contrary. And I don’t spose you understand because you’re jest a man like Kendrick is but that’s the truth and I’m tellin you.”

She was quite breathless with so much and such vigorous expounding, and she might have been somewhat exasperated had she known how utterly it was lost on Higbie. For a phrase of hers rocketed Higbie far out of the murk of the inexplicable. You are, said his heart thump thump, just a man like Kendrick.... “Amy!” he murmured. “O, Amy, I wonder——”

“If you people are talking about me you’d better stop

250

because, after all, you know,” broke in the cheerful voice of Weems ... a spiritual bellow ... as he ranged alongside, “it’s my map of the cove and I might not let you come in for your share.”

Higbie ... saved the dykes with Herculean effort....

III

BUT between decks where he had brooded morose for hours on end, Kendrick, who knew nothing of Mrs. Potter’s interpretation of his troubles, banged his fist on a wincing table and jumped to his feet. There was only one recourse. Without a job he could somehow manage to exist, but without Ruth he dare not confront the seasons. O, if she could only forgive, he would go grinning back to Baltimore, strangle Dave Corson with his stark hands and dynamite the whole Chronicle! But first he must come clean.

Sprawled on the companion Kendrick found her and she vouchsafed him barely a glance as he sat down beside her.

“Ruth,” he blurted not venturing to satisfy the need of his hand for the touch of hers or the craving of his eyes to measure her loveliness, “I come to confession. I wrote the stories.... I wrote the first one while you were waiting for me up at Higbie’s house. I didn’t write about the hunt for you, of course; but I wrote the story about the pirate cruise.”

“That was the letter you mailed at Tulls Corner.”

251

Ruth did not question, she asseverated in a cold straight voice that bruised Kendrick with its token of suffering. “I knew what it was.”...

Kendrick kept his eyes on the bay, on the ratlines, on sail or sky. “It was I concocted the whole trip ... as a Chronicle story. I got Moggs to buy the schooner and equip it, although he probably still believes he acted on his own initiative. I was assigned to the story and I made a good one out of it. One does that now and then in the newspaper game. It’s a jackal game, a scavenger profession. One gets an early training in hypocrisy: favor this man, drink the whisky he gives you and hush up the murder; or if that man has no pull ... dissect him, drink the whisky he gives you and yell your loudest.... O, well, hell, there it is. There am I. I’m to blame for the stories. I’ll never write another one.”

...“And you considered us,” mused Ruth, “people eligible for dissection.”

“Yes. You had no pull of course. You were doing something the ordinary man, the man to whose vulgarity and morbidity every newspaper in the world caters, would become excited about and in the end would laugh at. It was my job to pander, to purvey him excitement and guffaw. I couldn’t afford to worry about what the thing meant to you. That was your affair. If the opportunity presented, my job, with which I earned my living, was to use you as the verifiable characters in a quasi-realistic romance. Burlesque. You gave me the opportunity.... But O, I’m not trying to defend myself, just ... explain, if I can.... I love you.”

252

“So?... But, with so much love, just what did you consider me?”

Now for a long time Kendrick was silent, because the confession he had to make at this juncture was one few men ever do make. They bury the fact in themselves, exhibit it with furtive relish by themselves in bar-room and smoker, and there is no formula for disclosing it even in one’s will. “Ruth ... how can you realize just what habits of thought our mode of life—with its inhibitions, its smutty hugger-mugger, its codes plastered over our deepest impulses—develops in young men. Girls become divided in two classes, those that do and those that don’t. There’s a masculine colloquialism. She does or she doesn’t. And all girls are to be considered in the former category until they are proved in the latter.”

“I ... did. It’s always nice to be with the minority.”

“So when I first met you,” continued Kendrick ignoring the interruption, “I found you desirable and I proposed to have you. O, this singing Edna-Millayism is lyric indeed, but you’ll have to wait for a generation of youths not so crass as mine before a lover will ever do more than mock you with it! ... Then in a night I loved you, and I love you now; and that’s why I’m telling you this sordid contemptible story of myself....

“I’m telling it to you, Ruth, darling, because I don’t see how very well I can get along without you, and because I know you would not have me smirched ... and you knew I was smirched ... and I must be clean. I was still the spy at Tulls Corner in spite of you, I thought I could get away with it, though it gave me nightmares

253

even then. And I might be still the spy if you hadn’t seen through my deception. I don’t deserve any credit for this revelation and I won’t claim

any. But when you turned away from me and I saw you were so outraged, when I tried to harden myself to indifference with the expectation of somebody else even lovelier than you to love ... then I knew how beautiful you are and how there is no one half so lovely and how I love you and need you.... If you could only love me!"

... "I'm glad you told me," said Ruth.

"But what are you thinking? Do you utterly despise me?" Kendrick at last made bold to look, and he saw that Ruth had moved her head very quietly and was gazing now at him.

"I'm thinking ... what a silly frightened child you are, and how I'll have to be always watching you to keep you out of mischief ... and how mad I am at you ... and what in hell we can do now to clear up this mess. So we can invite them all, Kenny darling, to the wedding."...

IV

SITTING in his curtained berth with breath bated Higbie shook them out one by one and examined them: shirt and collar and tie, pants and waistcoat and coat, black felt hat and long gabardine. How odd they seemed now and how long since he had shed them to don the flagrant habiliments of his piratehood! And the fun at last was nearing its end! ... But there was no time for brooding.

254

Higbie rolled the clothes into a tight bundle and wrapped them in a Chronicle. Then he stepped out of his berth and affecting his most ingenuous mien climbed up on deck for another glance at the sun.

Sloggy sank the red balloon now far down in the west. Higbie puffed out his cheeks and blew at it mightily, and ... "Out she goes!" he said to himself with a chuckle. Ah yes, blow out the sun, whistle up the stars, put forth one's hand and draw night out of the east! That was the way of youth! And it pleased Higbie to shout a jovial "Euax!" into the wind, and when he perceived out of the corner of his eye that this lunatic demonstration had smitten Moggs agape he shrugged his shoulders and shouted again....

And what would Minnie think?... And what would Martha do when, hurrying home from Djabbir and her mission among the benighted savages, she found in Walbrook rumors incredible and proof of the worst and wildest of them all behind her father's door, certified and complete! It was

easy to realize the imminence of Martha now for a tenuous odor of autumn hovered over the bay since yesterday's rain. Yet little more than a month—the Ides of October—she would be back in Baltimore. Once more as he imagined the stroke of amazement on Martha's circular countenance at her first meeting with Amy, Higbie erupted with uncontrollable mirth. Well, Martha could go back to Djabbir, Higbie chuckled.... But there was more to be done before dark.

This was a most flagitious chapter in the proceedings, and Higbie faltered a moment as he contemplated the

255

enormity of it. What if he were caught? But he put aside his hesitation and strode resolutely to the companionway.

Into Amy's berth now did Higbie creep. They were hard to find but he discovered her things eventually in a locker and rejoiced that they were all apparently together. He counted them over blushing a little and breathing hard but steadfast in his purpose: petticoat and skirt, waist and stockings and ... garters at which he tried not to look, chemise ... and one or two peregrine flimsy articles which he could not remember seeing ever in the drawers or on the person of Minnie. Corset? That at least was not here and Higbie ransacked the berth and all its environs in vain search for it, before he concluded of course she must have it on. At any rate he could delay no longer. He made a compact parcel of Amy's duds and wrapped it as he had wrapped his own but shrinking now with every crackle of the paper; and this bundle he deposited beside his own in his bunk. He could not smuggle them out until dark....

And a step sounded on the ladder, and Higbie popped panting and beet-red from his berth. It was Amy coming to get dinner and she referred him to the sunset. "Lordy, I never see so lovely a sunset, why the sun's jest like a big rose." Amy, amazing Amy, will you take this rose and tuck it in your bosom ... since when it lives and smells I swear not of itself but thee.... Higbie plucked the sun.

Higbie shook himself together and went on deck to

256

pluck the sun. But when he got there he saw that it was three-quarters below the horizon, and the tip of it protruding looked like a big red ear. I am getting modern even in my metaphors, Higbie meditated grinning. But

when his gaze mounted buoyantly up the ecliptic it was arrested by the first tremulous gleam of Hesper.

V

AT nine o'clock the moon had not yet risen. Kendrick and Ruth lingered between decks staring at each other across a checker board in a condition of reciprocal vacuity. Higbie paused a moment wondering to watch them ... seemingly reconciled but at the cost of both intelligences. He had an impulse to rush to Ruth and kiss her good-bye. But that would arouse suspicion, and he had quickened plenty of bewilderment at least already among the crew with his queer comings and goings and gruntings and bellowings all afternoon. Silently he waved the kiss ... it was hers and he had no right to keep it ... and stepped on deck.

Moggs and Pudley, curious cronies they had become! were gossiping together at a great rate in the bow, Higbie observed, as he rounded the deck on a final tour of reconnaissance. He greeted them briefly and passed on. And at the taffrail were Amy and Robert Weems.

Both seemed somewhat disgruntled at his appearance. There was a notable scuffling of feet and scraping of stools as he approached. He permitted himself a grin in

257

the darkness and tightened his stays and saluted them.

But then he lowered his voice, it would not do to have everything overheard, and addressed Amy, saying, "I'm sorry to intrude, but there's a matter of the most immediate importance that I must discuss with you. May I beg you, Robert, to surrender your companion?... And I thought, Amy," he whispered now in her ear, "it would be better for us to get into the skiff. Will you, please? This is something that affects seriously not only myself but you, and every one of us on board."

"Lordy Higbie but you have got me all of a flutter, what can be the trouble?"

Balancing precariously in the small boat Higbie handed Mrs. Potter over the schooner's stern, ascertained with a stealthy finger that his bundles were safe in the bow where he had stowed them, unshipped the oars and cast off. "S-s-sh!" he warned; and then quite loudly purposing to be heard, "What a beautiful evening it is to be sure for a row!"

VI

AND overhead how multitudinously glittered the firmament! They had dropped away into a planetoid of their own now, a midget world lunging through space that was dusted with suns, for that was not water they floated upon but night! They were alone together, Amy and he! Higbie laughed aloud suddenly with glee; and then he rested on his oars long enough to jerk the bandanna of piracy from his head and toss it far out on the water;

258

and then he braced his heels on the ribs of the skiff and bent lustily to his sculling.

“Goodness how you made me jump Higbie, and what you were roarin at I can’t imagine,” protested Amy.

“I was laughing ... edepol, I was laughing ... Why, Amy, look at the sky there, it is laughing with all its stars for sheer joy! The very night is rocking with elemental mirth! Youth is walking on the water, doing miracles with a profane bravado. Don’t you feel it? A jocund gusto, a ribald hilarity, on the very wind!”

“Why ... kind of, leastways I don’t know jest what you mean, ribald, but it sounds kinda jolly.” Mrs. Potter did not laugh. Was she suspicious?...

“Laughter is ... is the sign...” gasped Higbie in panting anapests between tugs, “of release ... which makes men ... gods...”

At his oars he strained, pulling until he could feel the sweet wrench of exertion at shoulder and hip and knee. He took a long broad sweeping stroke that sent the skiff hissing through the waves, that made her leap across them. He wished the moon would make haste to rise, surely his exhibition was one to be seen and admired! ... List, sweet moon ...!

“Hang on tight ... Amy...” he warned. “I think we’re ... going at ... at a tremendous ... speed.

... Look Amy ... can you see our ... our wake ...?”

“Lordy, are you tryin to beat somebody?” Amy’s voice had, it seemed to Higbie, a distinct tremble of apprehension. “And I don’t think really now Higbie anybody could hear us from the ship, and besides it makes

259

me jest a little nervous to be so far away, why I spose we've gone miles already and what if a storm should come up?"

Higbie desisted abruptly, the perspiration streaming down his cheeks, and he regretted his impulsiveness in the matter of the bandanna for now he had nothing but sleeve with which to mop. Yes; only a bitter cry could span the coiling sea now to the Mary Read. And what was he going to tell her? Aghast suddenly at his boldness he had an impulse to turn wildly around and head back toward the schooner. But how was one to find the way back in such thick night? They would be lost ... and drift out into the ocean!... Higbie was seized with shivers and gritted his teeth to keep them from chattering. There was no drawing back. Bloodeye, Captain Bloodeye! ... Up and do or die in the attempt!

"Amy ... I wanted to tell you ... I wanted to tell you that we aren't going back to the Mary Read any more. We're going home to Walbrook ... or wherever our home is to be; your home and mine, Amy, because you're going to be ... my wife."

"You mean..." gasped Amy.

"I ... I'm running away with you, Amy. And O, Amy, say something! Please say something! Are you offended?"

The response to this appeal was presently ... a giggle. "Lordy, I was jest thinkin of Robbie, he'll be waitin there on his knees all night waitin to pop the question, he had it all half over when you come along, won't he be wild!"

260

"But Amy!" Higbie pleaded between panic and utter remorse. "What did you tell him?"

"Why, I was goin to tell him ... yes ... before you come along. But I don't see how I can do anythin for him now."

261

Chapter Fifteen

I

THEY made a pile of the pirate clothes on the beach and laughed to think of some oaf finding them there and scuttling terrified to the nearest hamlet with news that the famous Baltimore buccaneers had landed in Virginia. Then they bade farewell to the blue water that basked in the early morning sun and plunged inland through a stretch of smooth tall pines. Underfoot the ground was sandy and covered with pine needles. Presently they came to a brackish fen where bullfrogs croaked and dragonflies hovered or darted over the green scum and white and pink mallows opened their opulent odorless flowers. They skirted this following a narrow path. Once when it was necessary to cross a freshet on slippery stones Amy insisted that Higbie go first and give her his hand to cling to. So after that for a while they continued hand in hand, swinging their hands like children, stopping now and then to peer into a flower or return the solemn imperturbable stare of a turtle on a log, and always laughing outrageously at everything.

“Ah, Amy!” exclaimed Higbie with a sigh. “How amazing is the world, and life! Surely this is the way one must feel springing full fashioned from the waves, anadyomene!

262

striding from the brow of the god, Amy, adult, aware, immortally young! To awaken like this on a morning like this! Amy, how happy I am!”

“Lordy it certainly is right surprisin Higbie to be here away from the ship all of a sudden, it seems like a dream, only I don’t suppose it seems like a dream very much to Robbie.” Amy effervesced. “But I don’t see how I could of helped it, do you Higbie?”

“You could have done nothing!” agreed Higbie with a bravado less feigned than felt. And they laughed again, and descending a little slope they came on a whole colony of lavender-blue gentians with their fringed petals coiling in exquisite cups. His two hands full of them Higbie plucked, and he found pins in the lapel of his coat with which Amy affixed the bouquet to her bosom. “Exceptin one, you ought to have one in your buttonhole

Higbie so's people can tell we're goin together," Amy demurred. Investigation disclosed that Higbie's coat was an example of the rule that buttonholes in ready-to-wear suits of moderate price need be no more than decorative designs in thread. But Higbie produced a penknife with which the defect was rudely remedied; and ever more merrily they proceeded.

"Lordy Lordy but I am hungry, I'm so hungry I could eat an ox," Amy confessed. They would get breakfast at the first farmhouse, Higbie assured her. And shortly they emerged from piney woods and sand with its tussocks of tough grass into a dusty road, and when they had trudged a little way they overtook a darkey driving a double-jointed decrepit cart. From him they ascertained

263

they were twenty-five miles from Norfolk. Half a mile ahead one black but competent Susie would welcome them with eggs and coffee at her hospitable table.

So, because it amused them and in spite of the delay it caused, they sat together in the rear of the cart with their legs dangling, and in such state jogged hilariously on toward Susie's.

II

FLAT on either side earth stretched away when they took to the road again, fed and contented, and Higbie's pipe fuming pleasantly in his mouth. But this was an extraordinary and an inviting flatness, Higbie mused.

"It is as if the hills were just lying down in such sunlight. It is a live sort of flatness, not the arid paralytic flatness of the prairie; reverie, not stricken coma. And that hummock over there, Amy, with the round brown eye: that is one of the drowsy hills turning its head to have a look at us and grin us good-morning. O, I know! One of these days the hills are going to stand up and shake themselves and stretch, and people and barns and Susie in her shack will all tumble off. Hills sleep for years at a time, Amy, and one must be careful not to build his house on the chin of a slumbering hill!"

To the right were the pines and to the left the fields, tobacco fields, the slovenly fields of dusky husbandmen. But little persimmon trees with the fruit swelling into fullness for the nip of the frost to ripen straggled beside the road; and now and then there were clumps of osage

264

trees with the great green wrinkled fruit hanging from them almost ready to drop; and at intervals where a brook slipped under the road a meeting of willows, an anchorite sycamore, a shimmering conspiracy of cottonwoods. Over all poured the sun tremulous with vitality, a glamor rather than a heat; and from time to time a monstrous bald buzzard flapped up out of the road at their approach and off lazily over the trees.

“So we’ll sell the house,” Higbie was saying, “as soon as we can; and I don’t think we need stay in Baltimore until it is disposed of, although it would be fun. To think of the Misses Quoggs when they call—which they will be sure to do if only out of curiosity the minute we raise a single shade—and find us smoking cigarettes! I shall smoke a cigarette and you must smoke too, Amy, and we shall offer cigarettes to the Misses Quoggs!”

The prospect of New York wonderfully animated Amy. “I guess I might as well sell my house too, I ought to be able to get a good price for it since they run the sewer out Third street and laid the pavin in Ellum, and then I could start a tearoom. I been wantin to start a tearoom for a long time, everybody’s runnin a tearoom, why even ole Miss Lancey started a tearoom in Centreville kitty-cornerin from the Baptist church, as if anybody wanted to go to a tearoom in Centreville!”

“A tearoom!... But ... I hardly know whether I should like to have you open a tearoom, Amy ... dear Amy! Do you think it would look quite right?”

“Lordy yes, why everybody has a tearoom, you can’t go around the block in New York without seein one; one

265

night I took a taxi in New York, that was when I was comin home from Detroit, and I ast the driver to show me sompmhm and he took me down to a place called some sort of a village, why there isn’t anythin there exceptin tearooms. They have funny names and some of them are bookstores too, so we can have the bookstore and the tearoom right together.”

Higbie deep in thought picked up a stone and tossed it into an osage tree. “But wouldn’t,” remonstrated Higbie, “the odor of cooking be all through the place? It was my idea that our bookstore would be a quiet, comfortable, secluded shop where people who really loved books could examine the shelves at their leisure, without the least disturbance. And the fragrance of cooking...” Higbie smiled molliently upon his companion— “...such

cooking as we would have, Amy, would distract one's thoughts even from ... even from Horace."

"That's jest it Higbie, and when they got tired readin they could have lunch or supper or perhaps jest a cup of coffee, why they ast half a dollar for a cup of coffee and a sandwich in those tearooms and if everybody that bought a book would buy a sandwich, why we'd be sittin pretty. I'll tell you what we'll do Higbie, we'll give a sandwich and a cup of coffee free on Wednesdays to everybody that buys some books! ... And you know, Higbie I wouldn't be half so good sellin books as I would be sellin lunch."

"Amy ... you would be perfect anywhere!"

"And especially doin nothin!" So they had a good

266

laugh over this retort of Amy's; and then letting her imagination rove she disclosed further possibilities of the projected New York establishment. "In the evenin," she proclaimed with passionate eye, "there'd be dancin."

"Dancing!" echoed Higbie a trifle hollowly. "But Amy, how do you expect a man to give his attention to books where there is the blare of a band beside him and the hilarity and stir of dancing?"

"That's jest it Higbie they won't want to read all the time will they? Why supposin a man come in in the afternoon to buy a book, all afternoon he'd go lookin around tryin to find some kind of a book he'd like to buy, and when he bought the book he'd be kinda tired and he'd sit down at a nice little table and have some supper, then maybe he'd smoke a cigar or a cigarette maybe and by that time he'd be all rested up and the people would be comin in to dance, first thing we'd know he'd be dancin with them himself! All we'd have to do do is take away their money!"

"I believe that is what they describe as getting them coming and going." Higbie could not help but chuckle over Amy's sanguine conspectus of the bookstore-tearoom, but he apprehended that she was considering it perhaps from too commercial a point of view. "We mustn't let business spoil the thing, though," he admonished genially. "The general atmosphere of the place must be ... more studious, restrained, dignified ... as if we didn't really care whether anybody bought anything, as if every amateur of letters was always welcome to linger as long as he pleased. It would be better to err on the other side,

267

don't you think, Amy? even give away a book now and then, if a customer honestly couldn't afford to purchase it." The dream was mounting from deep in Higbie. Ah, but this was to be a bookstore indeed, without prying or meddling or suspicion or compulsion or anything to scar the memory!

"And maybe sometime I'd dance myself," continued Amy ruddy with exhilaration, and she skipped a dusty caper of delight right there in the road. "Robbie and me we were goin to learn the Charleston, have you ever seen the Charleston Higbie, Lordy it's the funniest dance you ever did see and I'm wild to try it.... Why maybe Higbie even you could learn!"

... Higbie cleared his throat. "How marvellous and how inscrutable," he observed, "are the economies of Nature! For it occurs to me that here in this bland sunny Virginia, Amy, the persimmon is a sour and bitter fruit all summer long and must needs wait for the alien frost to mellow and sweeten it; and on the other hand up in chilly brisk New England the peach is a luscious dainty only while the brief summer loiters, and puckers up and decays at the first breath of the early winter. It is most curious...."

III

"If we'd of only thought to bring those pirate suits along," meditated Amy, "why in the evenin when nobody was buyin books we could put on our pirate suits and

268

maybe we'd call the tearoom sompmhm like ... like 'Treasure Island' ... or 'The Buccaneers' or sompmhm like that."

Higbie clucked in mild protest. "Do you still believe they are going to find any treasure, Amy? Why, even if it were buried there two centuries ago, it would have been dug up long since." But Higbie smiled again. "That would be very amusing to be sure, Amy—you and I in our pirate costumes. But I am afraid I shall be busy evenings; for when trade falls off in the bookstore I shall retire to my study and work on my next opus ... a most amazing thing, Amy!" Higbie laughed for joy of it. "I've been wanting to tell you about it. It's a new philosophy, a bright shining new philosophy, that I am going to write! The philosophy of transcendental possessivism!"

The hiatus provided by Higbie for a suitable expression from Amy at this point she omitted somehow to fill, so Higbie jabbed deep into the pith

of his subject ... jubilant in that sunny midday complaisance with warm prophecy.

"It will occasion a considerable stir in the scholastic world, Amy, you may rest assured of that. It will occasion a stir in the first place because it is I that enunciate it; and I have, in all modesty, some little reputation as an exegetist of the later stoics ... Seneca in particular. In the second place it will occasion a stir because it is so violent a departure not only from the stoics but also from all previous ways of philosophic thought. Why,

269

Amy, I should not be surprised if they tried to suppress the book! It will be a dangerous book, edepol, a dangerous and a beautiful book.

"It will preach the permanence of things and the transiency of people, the fullness of the senses and the emptiness of the mind. It will lure the sage from his closet and set him in front of the morning, it will shut his dull tome and open for him a flower, it will contend with him in symphonies and the logic of the songs of birds!"

Higbie found himself with hand lifted and heels scudding, already three or four yards ahead of his companion in the excitement of his peripatetic discourse. He waited cogitating new phrases until Amy caught up with him.

"It will be the apotheosis of the thing, Amy!" he resumed. "And the thing is what philosophy had dreaded all these thousands of years. The thing! But our Plato and our Aristotle, our Zeno and our Epicurus, were ignorant of much that now we know. They understood that flames may destroy silks and treasures and estates; they remarked that thought alone is not inflammable; and therefore they urged let us place our hope in the pure ether of the intellectual. But now we know that a clot of blood on a nerve, an upset in the blood chemistry, may fill their intellectual serenity with shapes of horror; that in short the thought is no less precarious than the thing. From that we proceed to a consideration of the relative primacy of the thing and the thought in experience."...

"Look!" said Amy. "What's that ole hawk got in

270

his claws? If it isn't a pore little squirrel!"...

"Metaphysically ... we might be classed among the idealists," Higbie pondered. "But our attitude would be somewhat different. We would indeed accept the Kantian noumenon as unknowable and therefore we would insist

it is useless to seek. Shall one forever stand on his roof and flap his arms and think one day at last to soar? Upon the phenomenon then we focus our attention and it ... it is beauty. Let us define beauty, Mrs. Potter. Beauty is of course not objective. Beauty is ... is the imaginative projection on one's environment, whatever it may be, of ... of that satisfaction, Mrs. Potter, which one feels in the full and wholesome exercise of the senses contacting it. Yes, I think that is a very fair syllabus of our position in aesthetics. It will give us an utter enfranchisement in criticism. And no less, ethically, will there be a total enfranchisement. I ... hesitate to say how far we can go, what latitude there will remain for us, within the mechanistic hypothesis. But I have no doubt that, scrutinizing the subjective factor once more, we will defend a new eudemonism, referring once again to our aesthetics."

Higbie ahemmed. "Epistemologically, Mrs. Potter——"

"Lordy; Lordy let's sit down for a while and rest our legs," yawned Amy. "I bet we've walked ten miles already." She scrambled across the ditch to a patch of grass beneath a tree, and then presently as Higbie was following her she relaxed and lay on her back, hands beneath her head. "What a funny man you are Higbie,

271

why you been callin me Mrs. Potter for the last half hour."...

IV

"A COURSE we'll get a flivver," continued Amy. "Why you can get a second-hand sedan for almost nothin now and on payments too, and a flivver's plenty good enough for me, why when Willie used to take us out drivin Sunday we'd use to pass all kinds a big cars stuck in the mud and we'd jest go skiddin by and give them the raspberry, you can go everywhere in a flivver that you can't go in a big car. Robbie was all for gettin a Roller Royce and I spose he'd sort of have to have a big car, particularly him bein governor and all that, but a flivver's plenty big enough for me."

Higbie sprawled gratefully on the cool grass and turned his face to the zenith. He shuddered a little at the thought of Sunday drives. Automobiles at any time were no pleasure to Higbie; a convenience once a decade they might be when it was advisable to get somewhere more quickly than

streetcar or foot could take one, but nerve-rendering, noisome even then. Minnie never liked them either, he remembered. Once Minnie and he had allowed themselves to be persuaded to go with the Updegroves for a Sunday drive through Green Spring Valley. "It is so beautiful this time of the spring!" Mrs. Updegrove effused. "Such flowers and such verdure!" But all Higbie brought back with him from that drive was a sensation of being struck at rapidly by telegraph-poles like

272

gigantic bats, a sensation of reeling around other cars and dodging juggernauts, a sensation of jolt and jangle and rasp and scream and stench and squawk and klaxon and bouncing up from the seat until his head bashed into the top. So far as Sunday drives were concerned, Higbie vastly preferred sitting under a locust tree, drowsing on the cellar door, behind the old house at Walbrook, gazing down into the Marvellous Vale, listening to the purl of the Luminous Water, being ... tranquil.... Automobiles, Higbie reflected, would surely have spoiled the Idyls.

"I've never owned an automobile," Higbie ventured, "and I daresay I may be mistaken; but I have it from Professor Updegrove that it is not the original cost, it is the upkeep that makes one so expensive."

"Lordy no Higbie!" Amy tittered with amusement at, Higbie interpreted, his provincialism. "Big cars a course cost a lot to run, why even a tire sets you back fifty or sixty dollars, and you can't never get more'n eight or ten miles a gallon in them, but a flivver don't cost you nothin' hardly, you can get twenty miles a gallon in a flivver."

"Well ... but you see, Amy, we aren't going to have much of an income. I presume it will take quite a bit in overhead to keep a shop in any suitable location in New York. Rents must be very high. And then too..." —this point came to Higbie with the force of true afflatus— "...your tearoom is by no means sure to bring us much revenue. As you yourself pointed out New York is filled with tearooms, and that means less

273

business for each of them; I shouldn't wonder if most of them are financial failures. It's quite likely that your tearoom won't be profitable; indeed, Amy, if it does no more than pay for itself I'll be satisfied. And we'll have dances every night, and——"

“Yoo-hoo!” Higbie dropped as if winged from the flight of his argument and perceived that Amy was sitting bolt upright and wigwagging vigorously. The gride of brakes thrown hastily on pierced the sunny quiet. Higbie himself sat up and saw ... a flivver panting on the dusty road before them.

“Goin towards Norfolk?” Amy called cheerily. “Because you might give us a lift if you’re goin that way, it’s pretty hot walkin.”

“Amy!” muttered Higbie in dismay. “Amy, don’t! We don’t want to beg a ride, you know, from a stranger! It’s not quite dignified, do you think?”

But his protest came too late. Amy was already on her feet and sliding through the ditch. The driver of the car gaped inanely as he threw open the door of the tonneau, but he said nothing; and that, Higbie observed, was in part because his mouth was full of tobacco, and in part obviously because his head was empty of sense. A furlong grin straddled across the young man’s swart tanned visage, prickling with coarse bristles. He was in overalls and denim shirt, open at the throat and very dirty. He spat expertly over the windshield.

“Hurry up, Higbie we can’t keep the man waitin all day!” Amy adjured with a trace of impatience from the car.

Blushing Higbie got to his feet and followed her.

274

V

FOR a mile the road was execrable, but then it debouched into a macadam highway on which they slithered without a jolt at ... a hundred miles an hour. Higbie craned and squinted at the speedometer. Wretched device, it was completely out of order, it registered only a deceitful thirty-five. And traffic was getting heavier now as they drew nearer to Norfolk. Only by miracle did they brush safely past car after car. The driver, who reined his iron steed with one loose hand while he scratched at a chin magnificent with acne with the other, was manifestly representative of some inbred degenerate outland type. Sub-moron at best. And to think of an imbecile like that being granted a license to ... Perii! Half an inch more that time and they’d all have been in the ditch!...

How stupid, to look with alarm on travel by sea and with bland equanimity on travel by land! Why, it was a thousand times safer back there

on board the Mary Read with Moggs at the wheel, no matter how the billows reared, than here behind a halfwit driver in his rattling contraption of tin on wheels! Even if he were the most cautious chauffeur in the world, one could not foresee when an axle might break or a wheel come off. Higbie tormented tried to bend the plumb-line of his vision over and around the mudgard and convince himself that the wheel on his side was not actually at this very minute ... slipping from its hub.... Eheu, there were no such contingencies to dread on shipboard!...

275

And they must be in terrible distress, back there on the Mary Read, now. It had been inconsiderate to run away without leaving a note of explanation. Indeed, Ruth was his friend, she would never betray him, he might have confided his plans in her. But now, finding the skiff missing, they would conclude that Amy and he had gone for a row and been lost, or capsized and drowned. Ruth would be heart-broken ... poor dear child, what an evil thing it was to blight her joyousness!... and Moggs would be reproaching himself bitterly for bringing Higbie on the cruise; and Weems would fairly be prostrated. It was not only that Higbie had disappeared ... and Higbie recognized in Weems an affection that had endured lively and warm through all the years since his graduation from Johns Hopkins ... but also that he had carried off Amy. Poor Weems! He had never loved before, and now when at last he did find the one woman in the world worthy to take his mother's place at Chaptonk House, it was only to glimpse and lose her!

A stertorous sigh interrupted Higbie's meditation. "Lordy Lordy I wonder what Robbie's doin?" murmured Amy. "Pore feller he really was awfully fond of me Higbie, I guess he won't never get married now at all."...

On Amy's bosom Higbie observed ... as the outlying houses of Norfolk began to slip past the speeding car ... the wild sweet tameless gentian drooped, yellowing and dejected.

276

Chapter Sixteen

I

GOLD!... A pick had ripped through the decaying wood of the chest even before they had uncovered it, a feverish stroke of the spade had shorn away the splintered boards, and now in the light of the lantern the treasure lay revealed. Gold! A hill of doubloons and louis d'or and guineas and pieces of eight (and other late seventeenth-century currency), with ingots and bars of gold, and nuggets of gold rude as when first pried from the lode. But that was a necklace of opals, that firemist coil in that corner; and that was an ancient chalice studded with topaz and amethyst, carved in the symbolism of ancient Inca heliolatry; and those were sapphire anklets. And over there ... sinister with implication, grisly memorial of one who reached perhaps once too eagerly after such stuff ... was a parcel of bones which Moggs prodded out with his pick, metacarpal and phalanx, hand complete, with broken stubs where the blade had lopped it off....

Moggs and Kendrick in the pit, Pudley and Ruth peering over the edge of it, they stared englamored and the pulse of their hearts could be heard almost in the hush.

277

Then "God almighty!" muttered Ruth. "We're rich! We're Cræsuses!"

"Ah ... ha ... ha!" quavered Moggs, and he leaned palsiedly and grasped a handful of doubloons and diamonds and let them drip from the corners of his fist; and "Ah ... ha ... ha!" again was all he could say.

Then he straightened into a rigid pillar of affright, and every pirate jaw dropped and every pirate breath bated, for clear on the silence of that woodsy solitude, so far it seemed from any human highway or dwelling, sounded a woman's cry, a sudden sharp cry of distress. Ruth, mastering caitiff knees and chattering teeth ... blew out the lantern. Over them tided the darkness and filled their eyes and their mouths, and all that could be heard was the strident respiration of the parson.

II

"AH ... ha ... ha!" came Moggs presently from the pit. "That indeed was prudent, Ruth. I was about to suggest that you extinguish the light. For it occurs to me that here we are with what seems to be an enormous treasure, quite open for any prowler to see, and we have not a gun or a knife to protect it. At the same time I am forced to the conclusion, from that ... that laugh, so to speak, which we just perceived, that there are strangers loitering near. They are no doubt good people, respectable citizens, but it would be wise not to attract too much attention to ourselves at this moment. Hmm-m-m-m?"

278

"Posolutely!" agreed Ruth. "My God, I felt all sort of ... sort of naked with the light turned on, with all that money. Say Pansy, reach me up some of it, will you? Does it feel like heaven?"

"The thing is," remonstrated Kendrick, "that we haven't got time to play with this junk. We've got to get it on board. It must be ten o'clock now, and the tide'll be in by midnight and then the Mary Read will float. The sooner we get back to her the better. Every minute we delay it's going to be a deeper wade. Jump down and lend us a shoulder, will you, Mr. Pudley?"

"And you too, Robbie," added Moggs. "It will require our combined strength to budge this chest, and I doubt whether we can manage it at that."

Pudley let himself into the pit. "Robert," he reported, "walked away by himself a little while ago. He said he was going to get some cigarettes, I believe."

"Yes, I know, but he ought to be back by this time." There was palpable anxiety in Moggs's voice. "That must have been half an hour ago, surely it was before Kenny split into the chest."

"Never mind him, Pansy; you've been like an old woman ever since Higgles ran off with the charmer," counseled Ruth scrambling down herself into the pit. "Robbie's got an acute attack of heartbreak. He's probably gone up the beach to shed a few lorn brinies. He was telling me just this morning that he didn't give a damn whether we found the treasure or not. O, wait till I slip him one of those goldbricks!"

Kendrick seemed cold. "I trust," he murmured, "that

279

none of his maternal grand-uncle's ghosts have run away with him, offered him a drink or anything like that. It'd be a shame to have to take the last of

the Weemses home a maundering lunatic like his——”

“Shush!” hissed Ruth. “Shush, you fiend, or I’ll brain you with a million dollars! Just because some poor woman yelled a little is no reason why you can’t let bygones be bygones. Maybe she came out here on a Sunday school picnic and ... maybe somebody insulted her. Maybe she’s like that, always looking for insults. I like them.”

Hers was a brave attempt to bring cheer into the pirate band, whose combined shaking brought little sand-slides down on their heads, but it did not completely attain its end. “Gimme a hold there,” continued Ruth, “and everybody put his hands under the box. All ready? Ah ... ha ... ha!”

On the last ha with bitten gasps the pirates strained to the task. Backs creaked audibly, shoulders wrenched in one convulsive heave; and with a rip and crash the whole top of the chest, rotted through after two centuries in the wet sand, came off in their hands. Beneath their boots the pit was strewn with spilt jewels and gold.

“Damnation!” ejaculated the parson as the pirates, shaken with their effort, leaned back on the walls of the pit; and in spite of the disappointment the delighted ears of Devildamn thrilled at this token of the spiritual metamorphosis wrought in her father.

But Kendrick was brusque with energy. “Come along!” he snapped. “Back to the Mary Read all of us,

280

and get baskets and pails, bags, suitcases, anything! That’s what we should have done in the first place. And let’s go!”

He was half out of the pit before Ruth, grabbing about blindly, caught him by the sash and dragged him back. “Fill your pockets, idiot!” she exhorted. “Everybody fill his pockets and hats and mouths and ears and everything! And move over, Pansy, shuffle your dogs there, you’re standing on the necklace. Gentlemen ... I bar the necklace!”...

Jingling at every step, with eyes they could feel bulge and the tense steps of hysteria, the pirates crept through the gloom toward the beach. Never had night so utterly occluded all things as now this viscid night. Off there on the left was a salt marsh where fireflies trailed in ghostly processional, and phosphorus in a decaying log smouldered with chill sepulchral fire. “My God,” whispered Ruth, “it feels as if eyes were staring at you ... clawy eyes.”

But here at last was the shore, and there was the Mary Read listing a little where they had anchored her at noon, the lantern beckoning amiably from the bow. It was a good wade out already now that the tide was flowing, almost hiphigh for Ruth. How reassuring to feel the solid timbers of her deck once more beneath their heels!

“And so Robbie’s lost all interest in treasure!” chuckled Ruth. “Wait till I punch him with this!” She brandished an ingot jubilantly and ventured a call loud enough to span the Mary Read from stem to stern. There was no answer.

281

Weems was not on board the Mary Read. There was no indication that he had been back to her after quitting the delvers at the treasure pit. The darkness had assumed him without a cry or a scuffle. Night had filliped him with his black thumb from the face of the earth, had garroted him with a cord of shadow....

“Well ... he must be all right,” concluded Moggs frowning down his perplexity. “Surely it is his privilege to walk away up the beach by himself if he pleases, and perhaps I have been unjustifiably apprehensive since ... Mrs. Potter and Higbie vanished. Hm-m-m-m? After all there hasn’t been the least sign of any danger; we’ve seen nobody and heard——”

“Pansy,” Kendrick blurted, “you called it a laugh that we heard, but it didn’t sound like a laugh to me. Anyway I’m going to take a knife back with me, and I think you fellows had better do the same.”

“But Ruth should stay here,” protested her father. “Not that I anticipate any peril, Hiltonshurley,” he added striving obviously to meet the gesture of Moggs, “but ... we’ll need someone to pack the treasure away as we bring it back.”

“Yes, Ruth!” Kendrick urged. “Won’t you stay here? Please? ... Someone ought to be here in case Robbie turns up, to let him know where we are.”

Before the mirror Ruth strutted, her throat wrapped in strands of opals; and her clothes might have commanded the admiration of Blackbeard for color, cut and condition of muddiness, but her manner was ballroom. “As for my staying here,” she observed removing the

282

necklace at last with a sigh, “where’s my cutlass? I believe you were telling me, Kenny, that Mary Read and Anne Bonny were the last on their ship to surrender? You boys just see if you can keep up with me!”...

III

... *If* it had caused the pirates any alarm, that sharp cry of a woman in the darkness, it well nigh completed the ruin of Higbie’s nerves, for it came directly in his ear. Amy had blundered knee-deep into the slime of a fen.

What an unbelievable concatenation of excitements! The elopement, the ride to Norfolk, the various emotions of the day there—these had all been but a preparation for the frantic race back to the pirates. As close as he could come to the beach the driver had taken them, and he had left them standing at the edge of a somber woods. Hand in hand there they had remained watching the red twinkle of the tail-light grow faint with distance like a symbol of heavenly grace withdrawn, hand in hand until a shadow fell athwart the last gleam. Surely Acheron’s most profound grotto could not be so dark as these woods! But in they plunged, and they had been groping for a long hour it seemed before Amy’s mishap.

It took them many minutes to recover their wasted forces after this and Higbie was on fire with agitation. Tetchy remarks flocked to his lips, his patience was no more than a tatter and shred, but he forebore utterance. Grimly he told himself that their predicament was due

283

only to his abduction of Amy, and he dissembled his irritation and waited patiently for her to regain courage.

“Lordy Lordy what a mean night this is, I never see so black a night in my life...” whispered Amy. “And I can’t help thinkin of those ghosts Robbie was tellin us about, I don’t exactly believe in ghosts but my own mother use to tell me about seein it when pa died ... like a little bluish blaze, like ... like phosphorus.... Pore Robbie!”

Higbie buttoned his coat two degrees nearer the throat, pulled his hat a margin nearer the ears, and panoplied thus in an under-the-bedclothes manner against the powers of evil he took Amy’s arm. But now when they resumed their burrowing through the gloom he insisted that they go single file, himself preceding as a precaution against any further accident.

So on they went; and the next time it was Higbie's turn and certificate of right to do the screaming, for once protruding a tentative toe he found no footing at all in front of him of earth or water either. Into the night itself Higbie's boot extended as over the brink of the world. He tried to jerk back, but that which had seemed firm packed sand beneath his other foot now crumbled, both legs flew into the sky and Higbie found himself hurtling through emptiness. He landed with a thud that thumped the pent air out of him in one obstetrical grunt and left him not even a sighing breath to shout with. Then as he started to pull himself up an enormous weight smote him down once more and he was buried beneath an avalanche of Amy.

284

Gasping they untangled themselves and sat up. What pitfall was this, what chasm under what precipice? Higbie explored with his fingers, and ... "Amy," he whispered at length in amazement, "it seems to me we are sitting on money ... or buttons or something!"

"Lordy Lordy perhaps we have found the treasure, have you got a match Higbie and let's see whatever it can be, Lordy I got a whole handful of sompmhm!"

Not a sneer could Higbie muster now in spite of all his derision of Weems's hopes as he scratched a match nervously on a penny box. Then a tiny spurt of flame lit up that pocket of night, and Higbie peered at what Amy held out for his inspection; and lo, it was gold! "Infandum..." muttered Higbie.

It was gold! It was as if they had tumbled into some gargantuan wallet. A foot deep the pit was buried with gold ... nuggets and ingots and bars, heaping coins of ancient mintage; and the red smoulder of a ruby, the lavender beam of an amethyst, the virginal pale fire of pearls answered the glow of the match. Bewildered, fascinated, without a word or thought but each become one bulging eye, they stared ... and then presently Higbie felt his fingers kindling and snapped out the charred stub of the match with an imprecation.

"My God!" came the voice of Amy feebly. "Won't Robbie be glad to know we found the treasure for him!"

"Sh-h-h-h!" Higbie warned. "Somebody has already discovered it, I am afraid. And maybe it isn't our treasure, you know. Maybe it's somebody else's and if they return and find us here ... heaven knows what they

285

may do. And if it is somebody else's treasure ... added Higbie reluctantly dropping his own handful of the magic, "we have no right to take any."

Amy signified her assent by rising, without a word.

IV

ONCE more they tunneled into the night. But now when a quarter of an hour had passed since they struggled out of the treasure pit and still they had not reached the shore, could sniff no brine and hear no billows, it occurred to Higbie that they were hopelessly lost. The fall had twisted their sense of direction awry, and Higbie halted the better to think; and as thus in an attitude of intense cogitation he pored upon the darkness he became aware of a light immediately ahead. Three faint lines of yellow light at right angles to each other, as if escaping from a close-shaded window. A cabin! "Euax!" whispered Higbie. "We are saved!"

The exaltation both experienced over this miraculous interposition however was a pinnacle of illusion from which they toppled aghast at Higbie's first knock. Wide flung the door and before them towered a huge, gnarled, mountain-shouldered, neckless monster. His very readiness was bodeful and his snarl was edged with menace. "Who's at?" Amy and Higbie collapsed quite into each other's arms, and at this the monster vented a roaring guffaw and addressed someone behind him, saying "Strike me dead, Cockeye, if it ain't some more of them, it's a lil man wid a big woman! Fust we git a hoppin

286

middle-size pirate askin where he is an now we git ole Tom Thumb hisself wid Mudder Goose herself.... Say, you wanna know where you are?" the monster gruffed turning back to Higbie. "Well I ain't gonna tell you but I'm gonna show you how ta git out an not come back!"

Before Higbie could stir in flight or battle the giant was upon him, one enormous fist pinioned him and another the gaping Amy, and giving him a monitory shake that loosened several of Higbie's vertebrae the monster thrust a hideous face into his. "Whater you lookin fer, hey? Whassa racket?"

Higbie tugged a little, outraged, but the ogre's clutch tightened at this and the pain of it on his biceps prompted discretion. "Why, we were looking for some friends of ours," Higbie explained. "We ... we didn't

know we were trespassing, you know, but we lost our way in the dark, and ... and if you'd be so kind..."

"Damn my eyes, Cockeye!" bawled the troll. "Lil man says he's got some frens here, git yer gat an come along. ... Where's em frens at, hey, sonny?"

"I don't know, I'm lost, I tell you!" girmed Higbie feeling the bones of his forearm crunch.

Now thunderous footfalls resounded in the cabin and a second monster appeared in the doorway, carrying a pistol that measured surely half of Higbie's proudest stature. Then the door closed, darkness engulfed them, and Higbie was swept away through the woods.

"Fust Capn Kidd hisself an den a lil ole brownie wid a big woman!" mused the monster. "Where's de madhouse

287

at sonny, is youal out fer recess? Say, when we lets you an de broad go you jes take it on de lam, see? Dis ain't no place fer lil people to go walkin, me an Cockeye eats em alive, don't we Cockeye?"

"I'll say we do!" agreed Cockeye with a growl. "An say Billy Crise we better look aroun a bit an see if ers any more lil men got los, tink so, hey? Knock em on a head, ain't got time ta bodder wid em, hey?"

With seven-league strides the monster hurried surefooted, following some sort of a path. It was not a wide path and consequently it happened now and then that Higbie would be bashed into a trunk or hauled over a stump as he trotted at the giant's side. Onward relentless the monster lunged until Higbie was one bruise from shin to pate; and it may easily be understood how incapable he found himself of unjolted thought until at last with a final oath the fiend pitched him head over heels into an open road. A fraction of a second and Amy joined him; and then minding a grim injunction to beat it they took to their heels.

For perhaps a quarter of a mile they ran, and Higbie would have run even farther had not Amy drawn up with a pang in her side.

"Lordy Lordy but what are we goin to do, here we are back again after all that long walk right where we were when we started, and we'll get killed if we get caught again, O what horrible men!" She began to sob now in good earnest and Higbie writhed with dismay. "O, Robbie why did I ever go away and leave you Robbie!"

288

"There, there, Amy ... dear Amy!" Higbie stammered. But in the midst of his pleading a voice incredulous, mystified, at once accusing and welcoming, trembled out of the deep banked gloom at their right. "Amy! Amy, where have you been? What have you done?"

A scuffle and jump and Robert Weems was with them palpitating.

"O, Robbie, Robbie!" Higbie heard her greeting muffled as if through a comforting shoulder. "Higbie and me was goin through the woods and a couple of regular giants grabbed us and O Robbie I was so scared!"

"But where have you been?" From the flaccid undone Amy, Weems turned vengefully on Higbie. "Dr. Chaffinch, what does this mean? What am I to understand? Are you ... are you and Amy..."

"Nugæ!" sighed Higbie glad of the damnable darkness now to conceal his confusion. "You are to understand, Robert, that Amy and myself ... went out for a row and ... and couldn't find our way back to the schooner again. Amy has been tortured with anxiety for you and I could not console her. She is yours, Robert.... I have done my best to bring her back to you."

"Amy!... Higbie! ... O, Amy! ... Now let us depart at once. There is murder in those woods. I myself got lost in them, I myself fell into the hands of two giants, desperate characters who are obviously operating a moonshine still; I shall have the law on them. This, Higbie, is the noble result of Yankee prohibition! Never

289

in all my life have I been so insulted!... Let us go at once, to Norfolk; and there, Amy..."

"But Robbie what about the gold, Lordy Lordy we was walkin through the darkness and we tumbled right into it, why there is a hole there that-"

"Gold!" ejaculated Weems. "Gold!... But have they really discovered the treasure?"

"Yes indeedy we discovered it Robbie, look at, I brought a pocketful of it along with me, Higbie thought it might be somebody else's treasure but I says to myself it's our treasure Amy if we find it and there we found it and so I brought along a pocketful of it; look at, Robbie!"

By the light of another match cupped in Higbie's hands lest the gleam of it attract a revisit by the monsters, Weems peered; and there was ... gold! "Fore God!" he muttered.... Chaptonk House, the broad acres that once were his fathers', Maryland prostituted to Yankee Republicanism ... Maryland my Maryland ... Amy my Amy ... "Fore God," cried Robert

Weems, "I am going back! Into your hands, Higbie, I confide my betrothed; protect and cherish her, Higbie, take her to Norfolk and await me there!"...

A long time Higbie gazed upon the deeper darkness of the pine woods, and he thought of the monsters that lurked within it, the treachery of the marshes, the pitfalls and the ghostly presences that clutched at one's back; and then he considered on the other hand the distance it was to Norfolk and the disconcerting effect of sobs; and he was about to announce a decision when Amy anticipated him.

290

"Robbie I won't leave you, I won't and I won't! If you're goin back into those horrible woods I'm goin too." ...

V

... *THERE* was no mistaking the reality of that laugh, there was no questioning either the roaring girth of it or the savageness. Down in the treasure pit grubbing frantically in the gold, heaping it into grip and pail and bag and bushel basket, the pirates froze into stricken basalt as it came rocking through the woods. And Pudley, peering out, reported phenomena even more sinister; for he said, "Angels and ministers of grace! There is a light, there is a distant light as if a door had opened! And now it's out! There are people nearby, Hiltonshurley ... there is a cabin over there whence came that ... that laugh."

"Ah ... ha ... began Moggs, but Ruth cut him short.

"Pansy, for God's sake, don't do that! I can't stand it right now! Come on, every man of us, hurry like hell! I'm damned if I'm going away and leave a million dollars behind for a butcher with a laugh like that ... and I'm not very eager to get my throat slit either. Papa ... you keep watch! Come on, Kenny, get busy!"

Sweating in the murk, starting spasmodically at the stridor of a frog and the stir of covert wild life in those forsaken woods, the pirates finished their task with notable expedition. Now more and more did the terror of the

291

place possess them. The darkness crawled, accosted them with shadowy hands and whispered malisons. And thrice from different directions uprose a voice not shadowy at all, a bellow admonishing one Cockeye to mind the

gat. Who could they be, the nameless bellow and the grimly silent Cockeye, thus searching the woods? and for whom were they searching?...

Over a scattering of lost doubloons and a few negligible gems Moggs shoveled a layer of sand. Two trips would be necessary to convey all that precious cargo to the Mary Read. The first was without untoward incident, with only one bellow to quake them and that from far to the east. The tide was almost full now, easily upon it rode the Mary Read; and a wind had dropped from the low clouds, light but enough to fill the schooner's sails. Obviously the wade was too deep at last for Ruth. The water came to her armpits. Grudgingly she consented to await the return of the buccaneers on board.

"And do watch," cautioned Moggs making no pretense now to dissemble his worry, "for Robbie. We can't leave without him. There are, you know, there most indubitably are other people in the neighborhood and ... I don't like the way they talk. Hm-m-m-m?"

VI

WHEN they had departed ... Ruth addressed herself with her most truculent expletive. "See here, Devildamn, you're not going to get the spooks now!" she admonished;

292

and so, turning the light a little higher in the iron-bound lantern, she gave her attention to treasure.

It was a powerful counter-irritant to fright, this investigation of such baskets and bags. Ruth emptied a double-boiler on the floor and found it pleasant to be able to laugh indifferently when a yellow coin rolled away and was lost beneath a berth. Here was a serpent of beaten gold with emerald eyes and she clasped it about her ankle and regarded it with immense delight. Upon her wrists she strung half a dozen bracelets, and she found a quintuple necklace of pearls for her throat. This was the utmost resource of the double-boiler in point of jewelry. After a moment at the mirror therefore Ruth selected a tea-kettle and emptied its contents on the pile. At the bottom of the kettle and thus on top of the heap was ... that death's-hand, that broken fist, which seemed to twitch and point sardonically at her as it slid in a rush of doubloons to the floor....

Ruth shuddered. A girdle of linked plates was there, a cincture heavy with gold and precious stones and all the more rare with such exquisite craftsmanship as adorned it; and she made a gesture to pick it up, but her eyes drew back fascinated to that hand. It was clutching at her, it was clutching at the jewels on her throat and wrists and ankle! Gasping she stripped them off....

Mysterious creakings and knockings now filled the whole schooner. From the deck came an eldritch rattle of halyards and shrouds in the wind. It occurred to Ruth that here in the cabin she was trapped, cut off from

293

flight by anyone who might come prowling up on deck; and her imagination pictured the apparition of a grinning murderous face staring down at her from the companionway ... and how the enormous hunched body would let itself leisurely down ... sidewise like a crab.... She got to her feet, blew out the lantern and climbed out of the dark cabin, roiling now with ... evil things.

Even as she emerged on deck she heard a clawing as of hands on the side of the schooner. One moment she hung there rigid with horror ... and then losing all control of herself she ran recklessly into the bow, heedless of the stamp of her heels, screaming. "Kenny! O, Kenny!"

The immediate results of this appeal were such as to startle the night itself, for it evoked a triple answer. From the west came the jubilant hail of a woman who could be none other than Flash Potter, and with it a triumphant "Euax!" From the south simultaneously came the heartening shout of Kendrick hurrying to the rescue, big-shouldered Kendrick who would cuff the thunderheads themselves into civility. And from the east came ... that hideous bellow: "Here's de res of de madhouse, Cockeye, Crise if de woods ain't lousy wid em, stop you an put up yer hans, whassa matter wid youal, whacha want?"

Now pandemonium filled the gloom. Shout of defiance answered howl of wrath up and down the cringing sands, challenge grappled with challenge and oath with oath. Indeed it seemed blood would soon be shed, sundered limbs would soon be tossing through the trees, Mars

294

Secutor himself was entrepreneur for this brigandly midnight battle. But at this precise juncture an adjacent section of Virginia exploded, with a flash

that momentarily lit up shingle and woods and sea in dizzy brilliance.

A hush of utter consternation followed the blast, and the voice of the monster himself was the first to break it. "Jesis Crise Cockeye let dese nuts go an come on wid me, it's de still, de whole place'll be burnin in a minnit!"

They were off , crashing through the trees, roaring with dismay. Cockeye and the grizzly interlocutor. Splashing through the water, exuberant with greetings, panting with cheers, the pirates were making for the ship. Over the rail Ruth peered, and a hand wavered up towards her, and she took it ... and it was the hand of Captain Bloodeye Chaffinch, himself, no less!

"Thank God," muttered Ruth ardent with gratitude, "for prohibition!"

295

Interlude: By the Green Djabbir

Drugged with noon the village lay in the sun. Like cobras in the mating dance slim snakes of heat lifted twining upon their tails from the earth that seemed on the point of bursting into flame. Moist with steam from the rank marshes the air drooped, saturated with the sweet queasy odor that exuded from the dripping mouths of the bhangga blossoms, which panted on their coiled saprophytic vines waiting for insects to gulp and ingest, insatiable. In the yellow glare the river slept a glassy sheet of emerald green, and those seeming logs that drifted upon it were torpid crocodiles. Silence too, one would have said, for the remote roar of a lion, the maundering laugh of a hyena, floated over the trees as over the surface of the sea without penetrating to the depths. And the wailing of a native kree, the interminable throbbing of a tom-tom, which came from the thatched oval council house, these too were not sounds. Noon was a fever and that wailing was a pain and that throbbing the labor of the agonized heart.

On the porch of the mission house behind the lattice Mhomba Mart'a sat alone in the wide rocking chair, uncorseted, ample feet bare in her sandals. Down the lane which sloped through the village to the brink of the Djabbir she gazed. "And this," she murmured to herself,

296

"is Africa!" A fresh torrent of tears gushed from her scalded eyes and she buried her face in her hands, trying to muffle her sobs lest they rouse the

Rev. Mr. Ezra Pennypacker who sprawled on his couch inside in his midday siesta.

Indeed it was Africa. Rider Haggard himself could suggest nothing more. It was the Africa men dream about and all too often fail to find when they seek the heart of that uncensorable continent; and during all the eight years of her sojourn by the Djabbir Mhomba Mart'a had never realized how much she loved it until now that she was about to leave it forever. All summer she had looked forward to the contingency but the day of departure seemed far in the future. Then came the equinox with its passionate fecundating rains and parturient noons. She tore the August sheet off the calendar. September stabbed her.

She had been packing all week now. Dresses she had not worn for years and could no longer induce together around the middle, albeit they were originally in the stout misses' sizes; outmoded spinster bonnets, a book and a photograph album: into her small trunk they went one day, only to be taken out and rearranged the next. They were all her estate and they would rattle absurdly even in this little trunk and they were the symbol of her sacrifice. They were her duty ... and for them she was relinquishing all the glamor surrounding her, color, luxuriance, vividness, fragrance ... Djabbir!

She would go back to Baltimore. She would be trudging paved streets and sidewalks, she would be sweating

297

in the kitchen, she would sit stiff and stayed and wretched every Sunday on those hard benches in the Walbrook Methodist church. She would alternate between sessions of the Ladies' Aid Society, stupid calls on Mrs. Murchthaw, and household drudgery for a slightly demented father who required managing. But it was not only the mere return to Baltimore that broke her heart. It was also that she would go back thirty-five pounds more of her in the petticoat than there had been when with a pang of relief she embarked for Africa, eight years ago.

Once again Martha collapsed in lachrymose dissolution, silencing her snuffles in a capacious handkerchief. A troop of howler monkeys went rioting through the trees. Above their outcry she did not hear the light thud as a burnished black shape, vaulting the porch rail, dropped on two bare feet beside her. Only at the third hoarse whisper did she look up ... "Mhomba Mart'a!"...

“N’gnachi!” she exclaimed. “Where have you been, N’gnachi? It is four weeks now since you came to Sunday school.”

It was in Djabbirese that Martha spoke, an agglutinative language extremely complex in its inflected forms, which she used nevertheless with remarkable fluency. She was proud of her mastery of Djabbirese. What would Higbie think of it? she reflected; for she remembered keenly his unuttered but sensible disappointment over her lackadaisical Latin. But she abominated that tongue. A phrase of it, a word even, the most devoutly whispered “Ave Maria ... conjured up hideous memories of the Girls’ Latin School and nasty children

298

who called her Fatty. In the Djabbirese on the contrary the noun *mhomg*, meaning obese person, was a cognate of the adjective *mhomg-ga*, meaning lovely, and of the title *Mhomba*, Lady, by which the natives addressed her.... Fatty Martha! ... *Mhomba Mart’* ... They were in a way the same, but ah, how different!

“*Mhomba Mart’a...*” The voice of the prince was dull as if with too bitter suffering. “I have been away. I was mad, *Mhomba Mart’a*. I ran with the jackal and laired with the lion, I strove with the gorilla and bridled the wild swift antelope.... I have brought you a gift, *Mhomba Mart’a*.”

It was an ivory-nut of coffee brown carved into a little effigy of luscious contours. Martha recognized in it the voluptuous smile of the goddess *Maanh’ee*. In every village of Djabbir now at the equinox sacrifice was made to her; in every village was a fountain of ivory rising from a basin, and in each basin a tangle of sacred vipers waited for the ceremonial feeding. Her rites were ... certainly solstitial, to say it with circumspection, and the Rev. Mr. Pennypacker never ceased to inveigh against them. But now as Martha stared confused at the goddess, whose eyes were slivers of emeralds and whose lips and nipples and navel of carnelian, she perceived an enigmatic fascination in that smile....

“I have been mad, *Mhomba Mart’a*. I told myself I could not remain and watch you ... make ready to depart. So I fled into the jungle trying to forget you, and with you forget the village and my father and my tribe, my wives and my children, my wars and my canoes

299

and my riches. All I forgot, I became as a beast with the beasts and forgot everything, save ... I forgot not you, Mhomba Mart'a. I was mad. So I could not remain in the jungle and I have come back."

Martha tore her gaze from the hypnotic smile of Maanh'ee, but N'gnachi squatting at her feet smiled upon her too and inexplicably pavid she dared not face him. "N'gnachi..." she whispered, "you will forget me when I have gone. You will go to Sunday school, you will say your prayers every night to the White Father, you——"

His passionate hiss of denial arrested her. "I shall never forget, I shall curse the White Father, I shall throw down this house and hunt the prayer-man out of Djabbir! Never again, if you go, shall I welcome one of your people here ... for I love you, Mhomba Marta! I love you!"

"N'gnachi, you are mad indeed!" cried Martha, as loudly as she dared without waking Mr. Pennypacker, and she clutched the arms of the chair as if to rise. But the hands of the Prince fell upon hers paralyzing them and his voice was savage as he leaned over her.

"You are beautiful, Mhomba Martha! You were beautiful when you came here years ago, and I, a stripling then with only the seven wives of my birthright, turned my back on them and looked at them no more. Now I have seven times seven wives and I know them not. For every year you have grown more beautiful, Mhomba Mart'a; your pallor has vanished, your anemic slenderness has swollen into incredible loveliness. The thin

300

white moon is become the full red moon! You are more beautiful than Maanh'ee herself, whose buttocks——"

"N'gnachi!" gasped the appalled maiden, knowing the futility of any struggle she might make. "Shall I call Mr. Pennypacker?"

N'gnachi released her and drew himself up superb in his wrath. "I should kill him, Mhomba Mart'a." And then once more he was pleading. "Ah, stay, Mhomba Mart'a! You do not wish to go; see, you have been weeping. And I love you! I love you ... as the adder loves Maanh'ee, Mhomba Mart'a! ... as the little brown pig loves the mud! Stay with me here!..."

... Noon was a fever, and that incessant wailing of the kree was passion in the veins of the noon, and that throbbing of the tom-tom ecstasy at the heart of the noon. Heat lay a yellow delirium upon the village, thick with the aphrodisiac odor of the bhangga blossoms. And Martha drowning in the

noon saw that two of the sticky petal-mouths had seized upon each other and clung ... panting.

Chapter Seventeen

I

FAR out on the bay the slim hull of a freighter crawled northward carrying a little yellow star at her mast-head into the low-hung moon. She was bound for Baltimore, she would swing into the Patapsco by morning and creep to her wharf at the feet of the bustling city. Baltimore ... and thither too the Mary Read was pointed, more leisurely than the freighter perforce but at her most clipping speed by day to be sure, and filled with a nervousness of anticipation from which Higbie found himself fleeing. Now, hove to for the night in spite of Ruth's agitated insistence that they delay no more, the Mary Read lolled at anchor. Sprawled on the companion Higbie watched the freighter sliding past, in sharp silhouette for a moment as she crossed the moonway, and on her funnel a black troll of smoke that danced against the silver disk. It was in his mind that the summer was nearing its end, the pirate cruise its haven.

He was glad ... in many ways. The ridicule and contempt he had expected to face he knew now would be precluded by that last and most amazing newspaper story, which Kendrick had consented to write, informing the world of the discovery of treasure. However motley-

302

mined a man may act, if he finds treasure he is forgiven, even commended. And so it would not be necessary now to sell the old house at Walbrook that was, no matter how he affected to rejoice at the opportunity to discard it along with the rest of the routine past, his home. He would not go to New York, not immediately at least, and if ever he felt again an impulse to start a bookshop he could do so in Baltimore. Over the Marvellous Vale, above the Luminous Water, the old house hung and Higbie was going home to it and he was glad.

Tonight he found himself very tired. It was not the fatigue that follows a day's or an hour's strenuous endeavor. It was a deeper weariness as after a season or a war, Higbie told himself, a mental and emotional lassitude infinitely and subtly pervasive, that asked a special rest. It had been in his bones all evening.

For a little while he had paused to chat with Ruth and Kendrick, and he had interrupted them in an animated dispute over what kind of car and how many they would buy; and they had broken off long enough to inquire all over again just how much each share of the treasure would be, and as to this Higbie had not the faintest idea or curiosity. So presently he had strolled on and encountered Amy Potter and Robbie Weems; and them he interrupted in a languishing mood, considering wedding arrangements. "And you, you rascal," Robert observed with a well-intentioned but idiotic grin, "must give away the bride. You stole her from me once, you unconscionable old Don Juan, and now you've got to give her back." To this Higbie replied with a perfunctory

303

smile and word of appreciation of the honor thus proffered him; and then as quickly as he could he contrived to withdraw. They did not seem inconsolably aggrieved at this, either, he reflected; and he continued his saunter around the deck and stumbled upon Moggs and Pudley. Into their colloquy Higbie tried once or twice to wedge a statement of some further principles of the new transcendental possessivism. But they were engrossed in the affairs of the Moggs Foundation, for the Purveying of Useless Things to Worthy People, with which the parson had decided to associate himself as chaplain. So in the end Higbie got up quietly and came by himself to the companion and lay down, and here he was, glad to be by himself.

He was glad to be alone, just as the others were glad to be each with each agreed, harmonious, unitedly conspiring against the years. He was not utterly alone, he was with his friends but ... a few yards removed for the time. They had their problems to solve by pairs. He was going home by himself to Walbrook, and he was tired of the bay and eager for rest, and he had a problem to solve unaided.... Martha ...

II

THE imminence of Martha ... ineluctable, like Taurus among the constellations, still below the horizon but soon to come bellowing up out of the east. Higbie told himself that he would be glad to see her but the pain of apprehension in him was not to be denied. She would

304

return to take care of him. She would have fixed opinions how he should live and she would force them upon him. Over the ocean perhaps even now she was voyaging and there was curfew in her eye. She saw her duty and would not flinch.

What was he to do? ... He could ponder the emergency quite calmly tonight, almost impersonally. That was of course because he was tired. His reactions were so pale. And quite composedly he deliberated and presently he understood that he would be utterly wretched ever again constrained to regularity and subdual after the dreams and the frolics, the defiances and the derring-do and the unresponsibleness to any one or notion, of this summer. What fun it had been! And what a reconstruction of all his ideas and attitudes it had brought about! Necessarily his manner of life would never be the same. He would have, for instance, coffee in the morning, ten cups of it if he pleased; and hot bread ... no zweiback! He would smoke his pipe squarely in the front parlor, if it pleased him to do so, and never again let himself be chivied into shameful hiding with it.

Eja vero! Martha could after all go back to her beloved Djabbir. He would employ a housekeeper of course, he would not suffer for lack of her care and ... discipline. If she only *would* go back to Djabbir! People should go wherever they saw the greatest opportunity for the development of their own potentialities. He, Higbie, should go pirating on occasion, and Martha should go to Djabbir. But ... would she agree? Conceivably the natives there did not acknowledge any more

305

than did he the need of Martha's ministrations. Conceivably she might regard him, Higbie, even as she did one of those benighted blackamoors, as an erring spirit upon which it was her divinely appointed duty to fasten salvation willy-nilly. In that case what was he to do?

III

HIGBIE turned upon his side and pillowed his head upon his arm, with a sigh not so much wrung as somnolent. The full moon tarried there and Higbie mused that it was a great white cocoon; and shortly, he reflected, the dawn will flutter up like a butterfly and spread its coral-saffron-yellow wings, its wings of lemon-green and turquoise, through the east.... But no, Higbie considered, the moon is a sacred turtle crawling over the black

marble floor of the temple. The moon is the breast of a swan drifting on an estuary of darkness. The moon is that bowl of chalcedony out of which spill the stars.

For a long time Higbie watched the moon, rarest and most elusive of all beautiful things, green cheese when one grasps it! ... and he thought of Diana and Selene and Artemis, and of Astarte too and Isis whose symbol was the crescent moon. How often she was feminine to those ancient peoples who knelt so many centuries ago on their beaches and adored her over their seas, sat filled with awe upon their shores and watched her while the chastened tides laved boulder and wet sand beneath their feet. How but imagine marvels of moon and water, from which surely no ordinary thing could ever come!

306

And Higbie thought of that chapter in *The Golden Ass* in which Lucius, exhausted by his many vicissitudes, invokes the goddess and she appears to him. Her hair is bound in a circlet of flowers beneath which it falls in long curls down to her white throat and shoulders. She wears a garment of fine flax yellow and red and white, over which is clasped a mantle of luminous black. Bordered with stars is her mantle and in the middle of them burns with waxen fire a young moon. In her right hand is a sistrum of brass that gives a shrill sound when it is shaken, and in her left the mystic symbol, oval basin with an asp for handle. Down to Lucius tangled in his strange seine of peradventure the goddess leans and, answering his prayer, restores to him the form of a man.

A beautiful chapter!... and Higbie dwelt a little on it, and found the coiled rich Latin phrases upon his tongue with a queer flavor of awe and wonder and expectancy:

“Regina cœli ... whether you be the tender Ceres, creator of fruits and flowers, who glad of the recovery of her lost daughter gave mankind all the good things of earth to eat; whether you be Venus, mother of mankind and protectress of lovers, adored in the island shrine of Paphos; whether you be Diana the sister of Phœbus, comforter of women in travail, worshiped in Ephesus; whether you be Persephone walking in darkness, terror of witches and every evil that haunts the night, venerated in many a grove beneath the stars ... shedding that pale sweet radiance over the roofs of sleeping cities, stirring the seeds of flowering things to growth renewed, making earth ready for the return of day! Assist me

in my distress, lift me out of my perplexities ... sit satis periculorum!"...

Higbie started, for he saw that from the horizon came streaming a cool white lustre tenuous as the northern lights but deepening and hovering and opening out until it became pillars and lintel of a vast portal. And the sound of sistra came over the water and the thin music of flutes in the veiled ancient modes with their dusky minors.

And now in the portal of cold light a face and figure took shape ... as if it were an embodiment of filmy cirrus clouds washed in the moonfall ... and Higbie rubbed his eyes and looked again. No amaranthine visage of the goddess confronted him, it was indeed the round familiar countenance of Minnie Chaffinch that gazed at him out of the sky with an ineffable placidity. A wisp of gray hair straggled over her brow; Paradise, Higbie perceived, had meant no change of coiffure for Minnie. And she had been buried, as well as Higbie could remember, in her best black poplin dress; but here she was with her kitchen apron on ... just as she used to be when she would step out of the kitchen as the front door closed behind him, and peer at him over her spectacles, and say, "O, it's only you, Higbie!" ... And now she wiped her hands on her apron and shook her head and ... smiled.

"My goodness, Higbie, what a wild time you have been having, gallivanting up and down all over the country in those pirate clothes, and all that! It's about time you were coming home. The lawn hasn't been mowed for a month and the pew rent hasn't been paid and the gas and electric light and telephone have all been disconnected and

the garden is just choked with weeds!... Did you have a very good time, Higbie?"

For a moment it was in Higbie's corrupted heart to lie, for he had indeed had a good time, and yet it was such a summer as Minnie could hardly be asked to approve. But it occurred to him that the clairvoyance of this spirit would not be deceived, and albeit he felt a little sheepish he squared his shoulders with a little defiance too. "Yes, Minnie, I have enjoyed this summer very much. I think ... I think it was all that enabled me to..."

"To survive me, Higbie? It's nice of you to say that and perhaps it's the truth, for you were quite undone at first and I worried about you. It was

fortunate you found friends and we should all be most grateful to Ruth. She is a very tender and lovely girl, Higbie.”

“Minnie...!” gasped Higbie. “Do you really like my friends? Do you like Moggs and Kendrick and ... and...”

“And Amy, were you going to say?” Minnie smiled again regarding him with those serene eyes. “Ah, Higbie, what mischief you have been up to! But it’s all turned out right, and ... yes, I like Amy Potter very much; she is sympathetic and good-natured and ... really a much better cook than I was. And Mr. Pudley too; he spoke very kindly about me. But I was mortified to see him tack that Ku Klux Klan sign on the front door. You must have the door repainted as soon as you get home, people stop in the lane to stare at it. Dearie me, what a scandal it has been!”

309

“But tell me, Minnie...”—and Higbie raised himself on one elbow appealing—“ ... do you think it was my fault?”

“Well ... you did drink up the wine, Higbie, and you won’t deny you ran off with four fine chickens; but ... there’s nothing very vicious in either, I suppose.” Minnie ... chuckled! hardly expected you to go back to church. You never were interested in it, even when you appeared to be most pious you only went because I wanted you to. For that and for many things I thank you kindly, Higbie. You were a faithful and considerate husband. I think you loved me in your way ... my way too, Higbie.”

“Minnie, I did love you and I still do love you!” Higbie felt an embarrassing trickle down his nose. I ... I wish you were going to be home when I get back.”

Minnie shook her head. “No, Higbie, you don’t wish that, or at least you merely think you wish it. I would hardly be able to understand you now, if I were as I was, and you wouldn’t be happy. You’ll be happy now at Walbrook, and I’ll be happy here until you come. You have many years to live yet and much work to do.”

Higbie thought of his wasted monograph on the ablative absolute and flushed guiltily. “I ... I don’t feel much like working any more, Minnie,” he averred.

“The new philosophy, I was thinking of. That transcendental possessivism of yours. It will be a dangerous book, Higbie, a dangerous and a beautiful book, and I

310

daresay they will try to suppress it. But you must write it and dedicate it ... to Youth, that can understand it.”

“Ah, Minnie, how wonderful you are!” murmured Higbie.

She looked away for a minute seeming to see farther stars. “Work and live; keep your eyes always in the dawn, Higbie, and watch for the new moon, and overlook no flower and never mistake the tenderness of rain. And take care of yourself, Higbie.” Minnie ... without a text from the Bible! But her voice was dimming now, her outlines were shifting a little as the outlines of cloud-creatures do. “I must go,” she was saying ever more faintly. “But why did you call me? Did you want something, Higbie?”

Recalling what it was he wanted Higbie faltered, for the imminence of Martha seemed to him now, fortified by the serene sanction of Minnie and distressed at her fading, a negligible quiddity. But there was that in the gentle penetration of her gaze which drew his inmost thoughts, and so he said, “I ... was thinking about our daughter Martha ... Minnie.” Then he bowed his head.

But Minnie answered, “Have no worry, Higbie, for you will go your way and she hers and both of you have your own troubles to cope with. I apprehend that you will hear from her but see her no more; think no more of her, Higbie. Think only of yourself ... and bring me that ... bring me that ... fulfilled and candid ... *anima candida tua* ... Higbie.” ...

311

IV

THE moon had dropped behind the horizon, Higbie perceived, and the stars were very still, and little waves lapped the stout quarter of the *Mary Read*. In the east the darkness was beginning already to thin.

Finis

312

About the Author



Leonard Lanson Cline, Jr., was born in Bay City, Michigan, on 11 May 1893. He grew up in Detroit, where his father worked in newspaper advertising. Following his death in 1904, Jessie Forsyth Cline moved to Ann Arbor with her two children, Elizabeth and Leonard. Cline attended a Jesuit high school in Montreal, before matriculating at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in the fall of 1910. He attended college for three years, and left before completing his course in order to marry Louise Smurthwaite. The marriage took place on 28 October 1913. Cline went into newspaper work, in Bay City and Ypsilanti, and finally in Detroit, where he served on the staff of the *Detroit News* from 1916-22, first as a reporter, but later, with increasing responsibilities, as fine arts editor—reviewing music, drama, art, and literature. Cline's first book, *Poems*, was published just after the birth of his daughter, Mary Louise, in September 1914. Cline's son, Leonard III, was born in 1916.

In early 1922, Cline left Detroit to take a position on the *Baltimore Sun* offered to him by H.L. Mencken. Around this time his writings had begun appearing in the most notable publications of his day, including *The Smart Set*, *The American Mercury*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and others. During this period he also suffered from a serious problem with alcohol. After being divorced by his wife, Cline moved frequently and wrote for a number of newspapers, including the *New York World*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Chicago Daily News*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*.

His first novel, *God Head*, was on the first list of six books published by the Viking Press in the fall of 1925. Viking also published his second novel, *Listen, Moon!*, in 1926. A play Cline co-authored was produced in late 1926, and at this time he married again. Cline's translation of Thomas Raucat's *The Honorable Picnic* appeared in June 1927, and was followed soon after by his third novel, *The Dark Chamber*. All were representative of Cline's remarkable versatility, and their common poetic style is about the only indication of their mutual authorship.

In the late spring of 1927, Cline's friend Wilfred Irwin came to stay with him at his rural Connecticut house. Irwin worked for a New York insurance brokerage, and came from a distinguished Virginia family. Apparently, Cline and Irwin were fast friends when sober, but they quarreled when drinking. Their first drunken bout left Cline badly beaten by the larger man, Irwin, who spent the night in jail. The next morning Cline paid the fine to have his friend released. A few weeks later, after a long night of drinking, a more serious quarrel left Irwin mortally wounded by Cline's shotgun fire. Irwin was rushed to a hospital, where Cline insisted upon giving a blood transfusion which might save his friend's life.

Irwin died several hours later, after giving an antemortem statement which absolved his friend of guilt. The State of Connecticut, however, charged Cline with first-degree murder and after four days of a highly publicized trial in September 1927, Cline changed his plea to guilty of manslaughter.

He was sentenced to a year in the Tolland, Connecticut, jail, where he reconverted to his youthful Catholicism after having been fiercely atheistic. Cline's second wife deserted him, and in order to raise enough money to save his Connecticut farm, he began writing the pseudonymous "Alan Forsyth" stories for the pulp magazines. For his pseudonym, Cline chose a shortening of his maternal grandfather's name, Oscar Fitzalan Forsyth. Similarly, Cline had chosen the name "Oscar Fitzalan" for the protagonist of *The Dark Chamber*.

Cline was released from jail in July 1928, his sentence shortened by two months for good behavior. Soon after this, he reconciled with his first wife,

and they planned to remarry when Cline could achieve more financial stability. Then, around December 1928, Cline moved again to New York City, taking a job with Time magazine. On 15 January 1929, Cline hosted a small party at his Greenwich Village apartment to celebrate the recent sale of a scenario for a play. To one friend he complained of chest pains, and after that night he was seen no more. Five days later he was found dead of heart failure, at the early age of 35. A posthumous poetry collection, *After-Walker*, was published by Viking in 1930.

